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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

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Abstract

This note articulates the reasons we need a rigorous journal focused on the interface between public policy and the nonprofit sector. I am joined in this belief by the members of our editorial board who represent our institutional partners in this venture around the world.

The man who draws the shortest cut shall start.

Geoffrey Chaucer in his Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*

This was Chaucer's way to get the story telling started as his group of pilgrims began their long journey on foot from London to Canterbury. Chaucer led a motley group of characters none of whom were particularly anxious to be the first to tell their tale. Starting a journal is something like that. Who will be the first to write in its pages and to begin to mark out the territory that we intend to cover here? It takes some courage to be first, including a willingness to face the scrutiny of reviewers from a peer group just taking shape. The authors writing for this inaugural issue have exhibited such courage as well as the determination to respond quickly to entreaties for fast turnaround as we tried to launch the journal on time.

Unlike Chaucer's pilgrims I do not feel I that got the short straw in putting my essay first on the block. This was my opportunity to articulate why we need a rigorous journal focused on the interface between public policy and the nonprofit sector. I am joined in this belief by the members of our editorial board who represent our institutional partners in this venture around the world. Indeed three of these partners, Ben Gidron, Jim Ferris and Naoto Yamauchi have also written for this first issue of *Nonprofit Policy Forum*. I won't preempt myself here by saying too much about the message of my essay. I hope you will read it in full. Suffice it to say however that nonprofits need to play a stronger role in addressing the many deeply serious societal problems that virtually every country faces at this time in history, and the way to do this is to ensure that nonprofits are strategically engaged in the policy process at every level, effectively supported by public policy and in position to advocate for credible and sensible policy solutions. This in turn requires systematic, rigorous and unbiased knowledge about nonprofit-related policy issues and the nature of the policy development process. We aspire to have this journal contribute significantly to the development and accumulation of this knowledge.

We take a small but significant step forward with the contents of this issue. In the second paper, Ben Gidron takes on the subject of "social businesses", a new hybrid type of social enterprise whose advocates believe it can address a variety of societal needs in a self-sustaining way by exploiting both market forces and philanthropic motivations. Gidron demonstrates that the success of this innovative approach depends on effective public policy along at least three lines – providing the underlying legal structure, ensuring financing opportunities and supporting the development of the capacity of these organizations.

In the third paper, Jim Ferris and Nicolas Williams take a fundamental look at the work of philanthropic foundations that aspire to bring about social

change. These authors make clear that achieving social change is complex and sometimes filled with surprises. A foundation strategy of social change requires an understanding of complex systems and where, within these systems, public policy can have strategic, positive impacts. The argument goes much deeper than supporting advocacy efforts or funding of innovative projects; it asks foundations to develop a greater sophistication and understanding of the contexts in which they intervene.

The fourth paper by Chao Guo and Greg Saxton examines the work of operating nonprofits that engage in policy advocacy. This analysis identifies constituent involvement as a critical factor in achieving success in the policy advocacy process – including constituent participation on boards of directors and effective communication with constituent groups. The authors also uncover possible chilling effects of governmental and philanthropic funding on the scope and intensity of nonprofit advocacy efforts – perhaps a difficult message for nonprofits seeking to build support of their capacities for advocacy work.

For our fifth paper, we are pleased to have an important contribution from our colleagues Noako Okuyama, Yu Ishida and Naoto Yamauchi on the development of public private partnerships between local governments and nonprofits in Japan. In particular, the practice of outsourcing of local public services is of growing interest in Japan although independent nonprofit organizations still have some distance to travel to achieve stability in a situation where local governments are just learning to embrace their nonprofit partners. Contrary to expectations that conditions of fiscal distress create the pressure for partnership arrangements, it appears that it is the credibility and trust in the local nonprofit sector and the capacity of local government to support a robust program of services that helps create the conditions where a mutually attractive outsourcing partnership can thrive. The authors believe that their results signal what the “new public management” will look like in the future for Japan and in other countries where the nonprofit sector is emerging from the shadows of governmental dominance in the delivery of public services.

We intend that each issue of *Nonprofit Policy Forum* will have a special feature section. We are thrilled to initiate this practice here with an interview of Ambassador Andrew Young, a historic figure and a man of all sectors whose experiences in public policy and nonprofit organizations range from local churches and the civil rights movements in the United States to the Mayor’s office in the City of Atlanta, to the United Nations where he was ambassador during the administration of President Jimmy Carter, to his present day activism in international causes including economic development in Africa and the rights of women worldwide. Ambassador Young pulls no punches in his views about the critical issues in which he believes nonprofits need to be involved as instruments to achieve policy change.

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Finally, I speak for our institutional partners and members of the editorial board, as well as my colleagues associated with the Nonprofit Studies Program (NSP) in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies in thanking members of the advisory board of the NSP for their financial support of this effort, especially Michael Z. Kay who provided the challenge grant to get us up and running. We also deeply appreciate the efforts of our staff, Linda Serra, our managing editor, and graduate research assistants Lewis Faulk and Jasmine McGinnis for their strenuous efforts to launch *Nonprofit Policy Forum*. Finally we thank the staff of the Berkeley Electronic Press for their continuing support and encouragement and for giving us the opportunity to undertake this new venture.

We have a long way to go to reach our Canterbury but the reward is in the journey and we hope you will continue to join us and to invite as many of your friends and colleagues along as befits their interests in expanding our understanding of nonprofits and public policy.

Dennis R. Young, Editor
October, 2010