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Editor's Note to Issue 9(3)

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This special issue of *Nonprofit Policy Forum* is devoted to gauging the vitality of the nonprofit sector in the U.S. by developing a nonprofit sector "health index". As explained by our guest editors Alan J. Abramson, Allison Grayson and Jeffrey Moore in their introductory essay, the papers here are "policy briefs" that conceptualize and explore various possible approaches to the construction of such an index. They derive from a competitive call for papers by ARNOVA and Independent Sector in 2017. The authors of these papers presented their initial drafts at the annual 2017 conferences of these associations, after which the papers were subject to *NPF's* normal review process.

Like four blind men trying to identify an elephant by touching its different parts, the authors here examine four different aspects and possible approaches to the challenge of constructing a measure, or set of measures, of nonprofit sector health. One paper explores how the political culture of a state may signal the health of the sector within that jurisdiction; a second paper explores how assessment of social capital may lead to useful indicators of nonprofit sector health; and a third paper expands more broadly on the notion of capital by developing a "capacities" approach to account for multiple types of nonprofit sector capital – human, economic, and social. A fourth paper, drawing on previous research on a national index for the arts, views a nonprofit sector health index as a tool to inform public policy. Together, these very thoughtful papers just manage to scratch the hide of a very large but important conceptual elephant, leaving much more to be discovered under the skin. In the longer term we hope that efforts such as these will stimulate significant follow up research and development so that society can ultimately gauge the performance and vitality of the nonprofit sector with the same kind of robust measurements now available to policymakers for evaluating and managing the business and government sectors.

The feature section in this issue is a review by Robert Fischer of the newly published second edition of the *Handbook of Research on Nonprofit Economics and Management*. We are grateful to Prof. Fischer for his overview of this fairly massive work, which summarizes the state of current research knowledge on multiple aspects of nonprofit operation relevant to public policy, including finance, taxation, regulation, market behavior, governance, social impacts, and performance assessment.

Finally, please take note of a few administrative items of interest. First, I am pleased to recognize Robert Fischer as a new member of *NPF's* editorial board. Fischer is affiliated with one of our financial sponsors, The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences of Case Western Reserve University. Second, I am pleased to announce that ARNOVA has assumed responsibility for financial administration of *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, helping us to manage the financial sponsorships that sustain the open access policy of this journal. ARNOVA is itself also a financial sponsor of *NPF*, along with the Urban Institute, the Humphrey School of the University of Minnesota, and the Stockholm Center for Civil Society Studies. We are grateful to all of our sponsors, as well as to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, for support that has allowed us to maintain operation as an open access journal these past three years. The ongoing challenge is to sustain and expand this support so that *NPF* can be freely available to students, scholars, nonprofit sector leaders and public officials worldwide, without interruption and without the authors' fees imposed by some other open access journals. To inquire about the benefits and responsibilities for your institution to become a financial sponsor of *Nonprofit Policy Forum* please contact me at dennisryoung@gsu.edu.

Please enjoy this new issue of our journal and feel free to send us your comments on the contents herein. Thank you.

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Editor, *Nonprofit Policy Forum*
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