

## FROM THE EDITOR

Conceptually, this issue of *Research & Practice in Assessment* begins with its end. The concluding Ruminare section highlights an inter-cultural fable, “The Blind Men and the Elephant.” Nineteenth century poet, John Godfrey Saxe, penned the rendition that is familiar to most Western cultures:

*It was six men of Indostan to learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the Elephant (though all of them were blind),  
That each by observation might satisfy his mind.*

In the stanzas that follow, Saxe offers readers the observations and corresponding assessments made by each blind man. Two men assert that the matter is “mighty plain,” one “bawls” his deduction aloud, and three others conclude they are able to “see.” One subject. Six individuals. Six perspectives. Similarly, the current issue puts forth intentionally diverse views on higher education assessment. Recent structural changes to the Editorial and Review Boards are designed to sustain diversity of thought, and promote rich assessment discourse among colleagues.

This issue opens with a provocative special feature penned by Wake Forest University sociologist Joseph Soares, who argues for the further development and use of predictively powerful tests that lack social prejudice. The piece is adapted from his latest book, *SAT Wars*, an edited volume that examines social effects of high-stakes standardized testing. Three peer-review articles follow. Zilberberg, Anderson, Swerdzewski, Finney, and Marsh address the impact of college students’ understanding of federal accountability testing and their corresponding testing behaviors. From there, Hoffman and Bresciani examine knowledge, skill, and dispositional competencies among student affairs professionals. Finally, Erwin employs a longitudinal design to link alumni self-ratings of personal growth with intellectual development.

In the latter half of the issue, I encourage readers to peruse the Review and Notes In Brief sections. Lagotte offers commentary on *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, a penetrating work for assessment professionals. Mahiri’s review of *Science Learning and Instruction* revisits the topic of knowledge integration and, in the first *RPA* software review, Gotzmann and Bahry focus on the free item analysis application *jMetrik*. Within the Notes In Brief section, practitioners and scholars alike may appreciate Zelna and Dunstan’s annotated list of selected assessment conferences. Ruminare closes this diverse issue (as it began) with a symbiotic display of image and prose by Basbagill and Saxe.

In the past six months, *RPA* has taken yet another qualitative leap through publication improvements and website development. I am indebted to various leaders of the Virginia Assessment Group - past and present- who provided the necessary resources and assistance to accomplish these changes: Kathyne Drezek Mc-

Connell, Keston Fulcher, Robin Anderson, and the current board members. The comprehensive website redesign could not have been accomplished without the *exceptional* talents of Katelynn Stein and Patrice Brown. A final note of commendation is in order for the *RPA* Editorial and Review Board members; your level of involvement and mentoring during the peer review process has been admirable.

As you engage the pieces contained herein, I hope you will consider penning your own scholarly piece for submission to *Research & Practice in Assessment*.

Regards,

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