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Foreword

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Foreword

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The *New England Journal of Public Policy* has managed to keep itself “afloat” over a thirty-year span. The journal, a publication of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies (renamed numerous times during the course of restructuring and reflecting our wider mission) has had the imprimatur of several directors and deanships—Ed Beard, Ray Torto, Bob Woodbury, more recently Steve Crosby and Ira Jackson, and currently Dean David Cash.

McCormack has metamorphosed from what initially was simply the McCormack Institute into the McCormack Graduate School in 2003 with eleven “tentacles,” conducting edge-cutting research into the issues that are most crucial to our well-being—not just in Massachusetts and New England but across a shrunken planet. This research looks at the issues that interconnect us and that will transform our world in the coming decades in ways we have yet to understand as accelerating technological change and the digital revolution, charged by its own algorithms, open the path to the future, which often seems to erase itself once we have arrived there. The global is local; the local global. The instantaneous is immediately in the past tense.

Whipped by the vicissitudes of fortune, the turmoil and tumult caused by state budget cuts, faculty cutbacks, and capital projects put on hold just after being named one of the top ten state universities by *Time* magazine in 1986, UMass Boston has tenaciously reclaimed its position as one of the best state universities in the country. At the same time McCormack has evolved to become a significant player among the think tanks and research institutions ranked among the most influential on the global stage.

Founded in 1985, the *New England Journal of Public Policy* survived through the decades. On many occasions it appeared that budget constraints would see its demise; the hangman had the noose around its neck, yet somehow it struggled free, and when the hangman finally had his day he did not tighten the noose according to the hangman’s guidebook. We reemerged in digital form in 2013, digitizing every issue back to the first, and in the process increased our readership by thousands, as students

and researchers were instantaneously given access to hundreds of articles. In 2014, we had an astonishing 47,299 article downloads.

We began to produce special issues, beginning in 1988 with *Aids*, which was published by Beacon Press and followed by *Homelessness*, later distributed by the UMass Press, *Whither Education Reform* (1994), *The War on Poverty: Unfinished Business* (2005), *Women* (2007), *Climate, Water, and Oil* (2007), and a monumental two-part series, *War*, which resulted in the publication of *Sticks and Stones: Living with Uncertain Wars* by the UMass Press. Our most recent special issue, *Education* (Spring 2015), featuring a range of contributors who are among the most eminent in their fields, drew the attention of national education conferences and appeared on the agenda of the Teaching and Learning Conference of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards,.

Throughout the tenures of five U.S. presidencies, eight UMass presidencies, six governors, and five UMass Boston chancellors, Shaun O’Connell has regularly produced scintillating essays distilling the essence of several books, “bundled,” as it were, because of common themes that run through their pages, into masterful expositions—profound, reflective, social critiques that invariably tie knots between fiction and nonfiction and a range of pertinent public policy issues. His extraordinary ability helps us understand that the best poets and novelists and nonfiction authors give us glimpses into the complex machinery of the human psyche and often imbed economic and social policy issues before they have found a way into the academic and policy-making mainstream. His essays fine tune our sense of a common, fragile, and often vulnerable humanity that finds further expression in the mission of the McCormack School.

After reading one of Shaun’s essays you will have learned something—and that “something” ultimately will find a place in your own scholarship and the scholarship of others who take the time to read the articles we publish, and among the many “nonacademic” policy-making leaders attuned to reading the best public intellectuals have to offer.

We salute you, Shaun, a UMass Boston treasure.

Padraig O’Malley
Editor