APS Statement in Response to Concerns About Editorial Practices at Perspectives on Psychological Science

December 02, 2022

Update: The following was sent to APS Members at 4:30 pm EST 12.8.22:

As we previously shared with you, last Friday, December 2, 2022, APS was alerted by an author, Dr. Steven O. Roberts, to serious concerns with the editorial practices of the Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Klaus Fiedler, of the journal Perspectives on Psychological Science. As APS noted in an initial statement on Friday, we take these issues seriously. We acknowledge and regret the deep pain this situation has caused. We are working to identify structural changes to policies, practices, and procedures that will prevent these editorial conditions in the future.

Upon learning of the concerns, APS took steps to understand what happened.

Beginning on December 2, 2022, and continuing through the weekend, the APS Publications Committee on behalf of the Board of Directors began looking into editorial processes and decisions for Perspectives on Psychological Science. They began their work when the Chair of the Committee requested information from the Editor-in-Chief, who responded to the request for information over the weekend.

In addition, on Friday, the APS Diversity and Inclusion Committee began looking into what happened and started gathering information to help inform future actions that will prevent these issues from occurring again. A goal is to strengthen the scientific integrity of our editorial processes and to review additional APS policies, practices, and procedures to illuminate weak points, ensure alignment with organizational values, and produce transparent and equitable outcomes. This work continues and will include opportunities for APS Members to share thoughts and suggestions.

Over the weekend, the APS Board of Directors began reviewing information in preparation for a meeting on Monday, December 5, 2022. During this meeting, the Board of Directors considered the editorial decisions and practices that led to the concerns. The Board of Directors determined that it lacked confidence in the Editor-in-Chief. The Editor-in-Chief resigned on Tuesday, December 6, 2022.

The work is not done.

This week, the Publications Committee and Diversity and Inclusion Committee met. APS journal Editors-in-Chief met with the Publications Committee and representatives of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. In addition, representatives of the APS Student Caucus Board participated in meetings of the Board of Directors and Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Students will continue to participate and represent student concerns via the APS Student Caucus Board.

These meetings have been focused on identifying immediate, short-, and long-term actions. Short-term issues include the need to identify an appropriate Interim Editor-In-Chief of Perspectives on
Psychological Science and determine how to manage articles currently submitted to the journal. We are looking at the processes and procedures that will be used to identify a new Editor-in-Chief. We will also be identifying a process for auditing editorial decisions at the journal during the former Editor-in-Chief’s tenure. We are working to review, clarify, and communicate the procedures by which an author, editor, or reviewer can report concerns that might arise during the manuscript review and publication process.

I have spoken directly with Dr. Roberts. I apologized on behalf of APS for the treatment he experienced at Perspectives on Psychological Science. APS takes responsibility for this mistreatment, and we will work to improve our policies, practices, and procedures to prevent issues like these from happening in the future.

This is neither a final nor an exhaustive list of actions. We will continue to provide updates and information to APS Members and to request your assistance and feedback.

Sincerely,

Robert Gropp, PhD
Chief Executive Officer

Update, 12.6.22: APS Board of Directors Accepts Resignation of Perspectives on Psychological Science Editor-in-Chief

Update: The following was sent to APS Members at 7:34 pm EST 12.5.22:

On Friday, December 2, an author posted a pre-print manuscript detailing his concerns about and personal experience with racist and biased editorial practices at the APS journal Perspectives on Psychological Science. We take these concerns and the pain this has caused seriously.

That same day, APS published the statement below outlining our commitment to address these concerns. We began investigating immediately and have spent the days since listening to feedback from APS Members and others within the psychological science community and convening APS leaders. The meetings have been productive. We will share more updates and plans for short- and long-term actions with you very soon.

We understand that this update may fall short of the details many of you seek, and we assure you that we are working as quickly as possible. In the meantime, we are deeply grateful for your recommendations and welcome your comments at APS@psychologicalscience.org.

Sincerely,
Robert E. Gropp, PhD
Chief Executive Officer
APS is aware of the significant concerns shared by Steven O. Roberts about racist and biased editorial practices at Perspectives on Psychological Science. We take these concerns seriously. We support editorial independence but also editorial integrity. Our goal is to publish and widely disseminate the best quality psychological science research. This is only possible if we work aggressively to ensure our publications use best editorial practices. We are working to build an equitable organization that promotes the development and application of high-quality science that informs solutions to the complex and persistent problems of racism, intolerance, discrimination, and bias. In the coming days and weeks, we will make every effort to address the concerns raised by Dr. Roberts and others, engaging with our journal editors, our Publications Committee, our Diversity and Inclusion Committee, our Board, and our Members to make appropriate changes to our policies and practices.

We value the input of the psychological science community. Please email us at aps@psychologicalscience.org. Thank you.