The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) will observe the 75th anniversary of its founding in 2014. In recognition of this significant juncture in ASPA’s history, PAR seeks to publish a series of articles about public service professionalism in the 21st century.

The founding of ASPA was one of many noteworthy developments in the first half of the 20th century, which included creation of the International City Management Association (ICMA) and the National League of Cities (NLC). Although ASPA, founded in 1939, brought together practitioners and academicians in pursuit of good government, conscious attention to the profession concept is relatively recent. The year 1968 may have been a watershed. Dwight Waldo (1968), analyzing the scope of the theory of public administration, proposed that public administration adopt a professional perspective as a way to resolve its identity crisis. Waldo (1968) wrote: “What I propose is that we try to act as a profession without actually being one, and perhaps even without the hope or intention of becoming one in any strict sense” (19). Waldo endorsed the spirit of professionalism, but was clearly reluctant to embrace it in all that it connoted for public administration.

Beyond the issue of the incidence of professionals in public service, Mosher was interested in who controlled them and to whom they were accountable.

For better or worse—or better and worse—much of our government is now in the hands of professionals (including scientists). The choice of these professionals, the determination of their skills, and the content of their work are now principally determined, not by general governmental agencies, but by their own professional elites, professional organizations, and the institutions and faculties of higher education (142).

In acknowledgment of the milestone of ASPA’s 75th anniversary, PAR is seeking cutting-edge perspectives about public service professionalism. We intend to select a small number of proposals about public service professionalism for full development as articles. The submissions will have to meet PAR’s rigorous double-blind review process. The articles that are accepted will appear as lead articles throughout volume 74.

Among the topics for which we are especially interested in receiving proposals are:

**Is There a Public Service Professionalism?** As Mosher reminds us, government is crowded with professionals—lawyers, engineers, doctors, foresters, scientists—who are responsible for the public’s business. Is there a convergence in the values espoused by most public service professions? How does the normative order of public service professions converge? What are the obligations, the responsibilities, to which all public service professionals should be attentive? Is there a lowest common denominator? Is there a high standard to which all public service professionals should aspire?

**How Well Did the Public Service Professions of the Progressive Era Fare and How Do They Need to Change for a New Century?** At least in organizational terms, the Progressive era produced an explosion of public service professional organizations,
many of which survive today. Did the public service professions live up to their social contract with their constituents and citizens? What can be said of them today? Do they need to reshape their missions for a new era?

**How Does the Concept of Public Service Professionalism Apply across Sectors?** Because public service is not the exclusive domain of government employees, public service professionals may exist in all three sectors. Given this perspective, what defines a public service professional? Should the norms and ethics for public service professionalism differ across sectors? Do they differ in reality?

**Oaths, Ethics Codes, and Codes of Conduct.** The oath of the Athenian City State has been associated with the first U.S. public administration program since its founding. The ICMA code of ethics is enforced as an embodiment of stewardship for good government in local governments across the United States. ASPA’s code of ethics was adopted more than a quarter century ago. What do we know about the symbolic and instrumental value of oaths and codes? Can we employ these codes and rules in systematic ways to improve the public standing and performance of public service professionals?

**How Can the Professions and Professionals Be Developed for Public Service Professionalism?** The models of professional education are becoming more standardized over time. MDs, JDs, and MPAs are now shaped in ways more similar than different. How suitable are our models of professional education for developing public service professionals? In what ways do models for professional development need to change?

**Does the Idea of Public Service Professionalism Resonate Internationally, beyond the Boundaries of the U.S.?** The idea of and consciousness about professionalism in American public administration is, as noted above, quite recent. If profession is relatively new to the American context, what is its status around the globe? Does public service professionalism have universal attributes or is it another example of American exceptionalism?

If you are interested in having a proposal considered for this special series of articles, then send a one-page (maximum of 500 words) title and description of the article you propose to James L. Perry, Editor-in-chief, *Public Administration Review* at perry@indiana.edu. Receipt of your proposal by November 15, 2012 will assure its consideration for the ASPA anniversary volume.

**References**
