



**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Dr. Jodi Sandfort  
Chair, Search Committee for Leadership & Management Area  
The Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota  
301-19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

October 11th, 2017

Dear Professor Sandfort,

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor in Leadership & Management in the Humphrey School at the University of Minnesota. I am a Visiting Assistant Professor in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University, where I received my Ph.D. in Public Affairs in July 2017. My research focuses on government and nonprofit sector relations, coproduction, and the distributional and performance implications of cross-sector collaboration. My strong research agenda, my proficiency in teaching public and nonprofit management-related courses, and my interdisciplinary background all make me a strong candidate for this position.

My overall research explores the blurring of sectoral boundaries and challenges the conventional wisdom in government-nonprofit relations research that the role of nonprofits is limited to the delivery and implementation of public services, and that funding flows unidirectionally from governments to nonprofits. In my dissertation, I assemble a unique longitudinal dataset and use multiple methodological approaches to examine the process and consequences of nonprofits becoming important players in supporting and financing parks and recreation services in large U.S. cities. I find that park-supporting charities are involved in the planning and design of public parks, and their involvement may have an adverse impact on local governments' continuous investment in these services. Moreover, these public-nonprofit partnerships are likely to be more integrative when nonprofits have strong leadership capacities, and the partnerships rely on formal institutional structures that go beyond good personal relationships. Currently, I have developed three papers based on my dissertation research: one currently under review at *Public Performance & Management Review*, and the other two under a revision and resubmission invitation at the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* and *Public Administration Review*, respectively. The empirical approach used in my dissertation may be applied to other subsectors where nonprofits play important roles in creating and financing public services, such as education, arts & culture, and public libraries.

Built on my dissertation research, I also collaborate with public finance and public management scholars to examine the performance implications of public-nonprofit partnerships and charitable support for public services. In a paper that is ready for submission to *Public Management Review*, my co-authors and I examine the trend and forms of philanthropic support for federal and state parks. We find that the growth of these charities over time reflects theories of both government failure and philanthropic insufficiency. In a second R&R for *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Review Quarterly*, my co-author and I find that park-supporting charities are likely to increase fundraising efforts and diversify revenue portfolios in response to incremental

government budget cuts, while reducing administrative expenses facing dramatic budget cuts. Other ongoing collaborative work in this area includes: 1) an Ostrom Workshop-funded project that examines whether urban park systems generate better public service outcomes when overlapping governments such as the city, county, and special district governments jointly produce parks and recreation services; 2) a paper that investigates whether charitable support leads to a better performance of U.S. state park systems; and 3) a paper that identifies the social equity consequences of the charitable support for public parks.

Another interest of mine revolves around questions of whether, why, and how local governments are prepared to adapt to climate change. My co-authors and I conducted a national survey of U.S. municipal parks and recreation departments in 2016, and found that they were unlikely to initiate adaptation planning until substantial consequences of climate change were experienced in the community. A paper from this study's findings is undergoing final revisions and will be submitted to the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. This study has also generated a great deal of data to be explored in future research, and I plan to advance this line of research by considering how institutional constraints and nongovernmental actors may shape local governments' attitudes and actions toward climate change.

My teaching interests correspond with my research agenda and my commitment to student growth. I am currently teaching an undergraduate course in *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* at Indiana University and have served as a coach for Marshall Ganz's *Leadership, Organizing and Action* workshop. I primarily employ case-based teaching and active-learning pedagogy in my class in order to present students with real-world scenarios, cultivate their problem-solving skills, and engage them in class discussions. To help identify and disseminate good nonprofit management teaching cases, I am serving on the editorial board of the *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership* and developing two teaching cases based on my own professional experiences. At the University of Minnesota, I would be eager to teach management-related courses, including *Management of Organizations*, *Management and Governance of Nonprofit Organizations*, *Introduction to Financial Analysis and Management*, *Social Entrepreneurship*, *Strategic Planning and Management*, and *Financing Nonprofits*.

In sum, as a management scholar conducting research on public and nonprofit organizations, I believe the Humphrey School would provide me with exceptional opportunities to thrive as a scholar and interact with leading experts in an interdisciplinary environment. I am particularly attracted by the Humphrey School's strong reputation in nonprofit management and collaboration research. In support of my application, enclosed are my curriculum vitae, research and teaching statements, and two writing samples. The committee will also receive separate letters of recommendation from Professors Jeff Brudney, Beth Gazley, Chao Guo, and Michael McGuire. Please feel free to contact me via phone (317-252-3347) or email (chengyua@indiana.edu) should you require further information. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



Yuan (Daniel) Cheng

## Statement of Research Plans

Yuan (Daniel) Cheng  
School of Public and Environmental Affairs  
Indiana University Bloomington

My overall research challenges the conventional wisdom in government-nonprofit relations research that the role of nonprofits is limited to the delivery and implementation of public services, and provides new theory and evidence that nonprofits can play important roles in creating, planning, and financing public services. I examine how these nonprofits influence the behaviors of local governments and the performance of public services through a series of related research projects. Collectively, my research advances understanding in government-nonprofit relationships, coproduction, and cross-sector collaboration.

### *Dissertation Research*

In my dissertation, I assemble a unique longitudinal dataset and use multiple methodological approaches to examine the process and consequences of nonprofits becoming important players in supporting and financing parks and recreation services in large U.S. cities. More specifically, I approach this overarching question from three distinctive yet interconnected angles. In the first chapter of the dissertation, I investigate whether nonprofits' involvement in public service planning and design, or co-governance, is a distinct type of nonprofit support for public services, and under what circumstances nonprofits are more likely to be involved in the planning and design of public services. The findings suggest co-governance, although not as prevalent, is indeed a distinct type of nonprofit support for public services. Nonprofits are more likely to get involved in co-governance when they are larger and younger, and operate in communities which are resourceful, stable, and has weak government capacity in providing corresponding public services. I have turned this chapter to a journal article, *Exploring the Role of Nonprofits in Public Service Provision: Moving from Co-production to Co-governance*. The article is currently a revision and resubmission invitation at *Public Administration Review*.

In the second chapter, I examine several prominent theoretical models of government-nonprofit relationships to answer the question of how expenditures of park-supporting charities influence public spending on parks and recreation services. I bring in the critical mass theory, construct a unique panel dataset that contains nonprofit and city government spending on parks, and use multiple panel data analysis models to answer this question. The findings suggest that nonprofit spending on parks in a city has a nonlinear decreasing effect on public spending on parks, which supports the market niche model. In addition, this relationship is mainly driven by local governments' non-capital expenditures on parks. This chapter suggests that government-nonprofit relationships are not identical when the direction of funding flow differs in subsectors. This chapter is currently under a revision and resubmission invitation at *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*.

In Chapter 3, *Governing Public-Nonprofit Partnerships: Linking Governance Mechanisms to Collaboration Stages*, I investigate how these public-nonprofit partnerships are governed and how these governance mechanisms are linked to the different stages of the collaboration continuum. To answer this question, I use a grounded-theory-based comparative case study

approach and conduct interviews with the leaders of public-nonprofit partnerships for city parks in major cities of the Ohio River Basin Region. Four governance mechanisms are developed in this chapter: government representation on the nonprofit board, reaching a formal agreement, building relationships, and building leadership capacity. Public-nonprofit partnerships are more likely to reach the integrative stage when nonprofits have strong leadership capacities, and the partnerships rely on formal institutional structures that go beyond good personal relationships. The proposal of this chapter was accepted by a special issue of *Public Performance & Management Review (PPMR)* on nonprofit studies. The full paper has also been submitted to *PPMR* for peer review.

### *Related Research*

Built on my dissertation research, I also collaborate with public finance and public management scholars to examine the performance implications of public-nonprofit partnerships and charitable support for public services. In a paper that is ready for submission to *Public Management Review*, my co-authors and I examine the trend and forms of charitable support for U.S. national and state parks services. We find that the growth of these charities over time reflects theories of both government failure and philanthropic insufficiency. In a second R&R for *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Review Quarterly*, my co-author and I find that park-supporting charities are likely to increase fundraising efforts and diversity revenue portfolios in response to incremental government budget cuts while reducing administrative expenses facing dramatic budget cuts. Other ongoing collaborative work in this area includes a paper that investigates whether charitable support leads to a better performance of U.S. state park systems and a paper that identifies the social equity consequences of the charitable support for state parks.

### *Other Research*

Another interest of mine revolves around questions of whether, why, and how local governments are prepared to adapt to climate change. My co-authors and I conducted a national survey of U.S. municipal parks and recreation departments in 2016, and found that they were unlikely to initiate adaptation planning until substantial consequences of climate change were experienced in the community. A paper from this study's findings is undergoing final revisions and will be submitted to the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. This study has also generated a great deal of data to be explored in future research, and I plan to advance this line of research by considering how ecological conditions, institutional constraints and nongovernmental actors may shape local governments' attitudes and actions toward climate change.

### *Future Work*

The dissertation has generated a great deal of data to be exploited for future publications. In the short term, I plan to conduct a research project that combines nonprofit data in my dissertation, performance data of U.S. city systems, and local public finance data to explore whether a more "polycentric" city park system generates better public service outcomes. This research project is currently supported by the Ostrom Workshop Research Award. In the medium term, I plan to extend this line of inquiry to other public service subsectors where nonprofits also play important roles in creating and financing public services such as education, arts & culture, and public libraries. In the long run, I plan to conduct cross-national research on government-nonprofit relationships in multiple countries, such as China and the United States, where I see great potential for theoretical and empirical contributions.

## Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Yuan (Daniel) Cheng  
School of Public and Environmental Affairs  
Indiana University Bloomington

*What we have ignored is what citizens can do and the importance of real involvement of the people involved - versus just having somebody in Washington to make a rule.*

– Elinor Ostrom, 2009 Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences.

Why do I teach? Here I borrow a quote from Elinor Ostrom, the 2009 Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences and my academic role model. Teaching is a bridge for me to connect practice and research, and a means through which to cultivate responsible citizens and leaders. One of the most transforming lessons I have learned through my practice and research is that citizens should never stay there to wait for “somebody” to decide for them. They have to become responsible citizens and reflective leaders who can actively and effectively participate in public affairs. As a teacher, my goal is the same. I hope my class can become a platform for students to develop collaborative leadership, set up initiatives to improve the situation of their communities and appreciate the diversity and complexity of the real world. I am currently teaching an undergraduate course in *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* at Indiana University and have served as a coach for Marshall Ganz’s *Leadership, Organizing and Action* workshop.

I bring three overarching objectives to the classroom, each of them is rooted in my belief of citizen cultivation, leadership development, and real world applications. First, I bring students to a conversation with themselves and their classmates about who they are and why they care. One of the key messages I try to convey to my students is that their fragility can be their strength and they have to define their own stories. Coaching is an important teaching technique for me to achieve this goal. By coaching, I mean a type of leadership technique that focuses on asking questions and enabling people to gain problem-solving capacities by themselves. It is not giving advice, making judgments, or telling people what to do. From my first teaching experience of the nonprofit management class, I realized that the class focused too much on the “brain” part – resource development, law, and strategy development while neglecting the “heart” part – story telling, value communication, and leadership. To solve this problem, I devoted two weeks of the class to help students build and tell their own stories. Each student had to draft a story of self that can communicate the values of why they take on specific leadership tasks and coach each other about how they can improve their stories. By telling and sharing their own stories with their peers, students became more comfortable in sharing their own opinions in subsequent class sessions. Recognizing that not all students were comfortable in speaking in public settings, I also designed multiple small group exercises to create a stress-free environment for them. One student offered the comment that “Daniel created a very comfortable environment for students to share their opinions. He does care about the class, and he shows great respect to everyone in the class.”

Second, I bring students to the diversity and complexity of the real world through case analysis and management simulations. Management is a challenging subject to teach since there is no

absolute line between right answers and wrong answers. The real world is very complex, and students need to understand and apply management concepts and techniques in the real world scenarios. To achieve this goal, I design the class so that every major theory section can be paired up with a case analysis. I also require students to write multiple case study assignments and offer them extensive feedbacks through in-class discussion and written comments. To get the best management cases for my students, I not only reach out to experienced nonprofit management scholars (I get several teaching cases from Professor Sharon Oster at Yale University, Professor Beth Gazley at Indiana University, and Professor Marshall Ganz at Harvard University), but also try to write useful management cases based on my professional experiences. In the international NGO section of the nonprofit management class, I used my own rural development experience to write a case about developing an environmental conservation program in China. In addition to inviting my students to the real context of that conservation program, I also encouraged them to reflect on the fundamental dilemmas of conservation and development in doing international NGO work. I usually write several guiding questions for students to discuss in small group settings first. I will then open up and facilitate the discussion for the whole class. This works well since students have already been through the discussion in their small groups and they are better prepared to share their own or their groups' ideas in the general discussion. I never need to worry about participation in my case study classes. One student commented in the course evaluation that “I learned a lot of real-world knowledge that will be practical for me in the future.”

Third, I bring students to a larger network of practitioners and scholars who can help their career in the long run. One of the best pieces of advice I get from my faculty teaching mentor, Professor Beth Gazley, is that I have to play to my strengths in teaching. I do not need to be the experts in every aspect of the class I teach. For subjects that I do have practical or research experiences, I try to maximize those to offer genuine knowledge for my students. For subjects that I am not as experienced, I try to utilize the larger professional and academic networks around me to create the best learning environment for my students. This is not only better for me since I can learn from my guest lecturers about how to teach those contents, but also better for my students since they can learn from the real experts and build a network beyond their instructor. In the fundraising section of the nonprofit management class, I invited the director of development at the Music school to talk about fundraising and development in the art sector. This was a blast since quite a few students in my class were in the major of art administration. As I continue to learn and grow as a teacher, I view guest lectures and site visits, both in class and online, as great complements to traditional teaching approaches.

In conclusion, as an academic, I strongly appreciate the opportunity to teach and believe in the value of teaching. As an individual, no matter how hard I try, my contribution will be limited. However, if I do the right thing as a teacher, my students will make contributions that are hundreds of times more than what I could make. This motivates me to become a better teacher every day.