**Higher Education Program Qualifying Examination**

**Part C**

**Research Methods**

**Fall 2010**

*PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS CAREFULLY!*

## Instructions:

There are two parts in the research method section of qualifying exam. ***Ed.D*** students must complete Part I. ***Ph.D*** students must complete both Part I and Part II. Citations and references must be in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.).

## Part I:

You are a newly hired senior administrator at Central Metropolitan University, a recently established urban public 4-year university in Texas. This university’s undergraduate population consists of mostly part-time, commuter, and racial/ethnic minority students from middle- to low- income families. In the short history of this university, undergraduate retention and graduation rates have been consistently ranked in the bottom 10% of the public universities in Texas. The dismal retention and graduation rates are of concern to the university’s Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

On the first day of your employment at the university, the president of the university gives you the following five reports—three from the National Center for Education Statistics (NECS) and two from the THECB:

* 1. A Profile of Successful Pell Grant Recipients (NCES 2009-156)
  2. Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups (NCES 2010-015)
  3. Part-time Undergraduates in Postsecondary Education: 2003-04 (NCES 2007-165)
  4. Texas Population Projection 2000-2015
  5. Texas Higher Education Participation Forecast 2009-2020

The president asks you to write a *Student Retention and Graduation Enhancement Plan* for the university’s Board of Regents. Your plan must utilize the NCES and THECB reports noted above and must address the following:

1. What will be the enrollment trends at your institution for the next 5 to 10 years according to the NCES and THECB reports?
2. According to the reports, what are the factors that may contribute to the success and failure of students considering their demographic group (White and racial/ethnic minority, low-income and part-time)?
3. What is your goal for undergraduate retention and graduation rates at Central Metropolitan University five years from now? Please be realistic and describe how you developed the goal.
4. Based on the NCES and THECB reports and other research literature, what policy and program changes would you make to achieve the desired retention and graduation rates? (Please note, your policy and program changes must be based on empirical evidence as showed in published research literature. Ideas without the support of empirical data will not be accepted.)
5. Develop an assessment plan for the new policies and programs.

Please remember that the targeted audience for your report is the President and Board of Regents of your university. Your report must be double-spaced and follow the style requirements of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Your report must NOT exceed **15 pages,** excluding references.

## Part II: *(Ph.D. students only)*

You are provided a research article to review. The title of the article is *Mind the Gap: The Digital Dimension of College Access* by Joanna Goode (2010). Please provide an article critique of its literature review, research design and method, results, and conclusion. Your critique should address both strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the research method as well as strengths and weaknesses of the article itself. Your paper should be between **6-10 pages** in length and double-spaced.