



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Dan Eignor, Educational Testing Service*

As I write this column, I've just returned from a very productive Board meeting in Madison, WI on August 18-19. Having Board meetings in Madison has proven to be very effective because it allows Board members to meet directly with various members of the Rees Group that work in support of NCME activities. I should tell you that I am very satisfied with the services provided to date by the Rees Group and I have found the staff to be a delightful group of people to work with. Our NCME executive director from the Rees Group, Bruce Wheeler, is very much on top of NCME activities, and we are all benefiting from both his level of enthusiasm and his attention to detail.



## 2007 Annual Meeting News

2007 Program co-chairs Mary Pitoniak and Mike Jodoin are beginning the process of assigning reviewers to proposals that have been received. In total, there were about 25 more proposals submitted this year than last year. These proposals and related papers should provide the basis for a successful meeting next April in Chicago. The electronic proposal submission system, which has been improved over the past six months, worked extremely well and we have John Hofmann from the Rees Group to thank for this.

After discussion with NCME Board members, AERA staff, and Brian French, coordinator of the annual NCME run/walk, we have decided to move the event to Thursday morning next year, the day after the NCME Breakfast. No longer will excuses that you can't do this run/walk because of timing issues with the start of the Breakfast be accepted, mine included.

The Rees Group and the NCME Board have been working on an electronic version of a member questionnaire that will replace the usual questionnaire given out at the NCME Breakfast. The new questionnaire will be available in electronic and paper form this coming year, and in electronic form in subsequent years.

## Journal Editors

I am very pleased to announce that Jim Carlson has accepted the position as the next editor of *JEM*. Jim will begin to receive newly submitted manuscripts in January 2007 and will be responsible for all issues of *JEM* beginning in January 2008 when Mike Kolen's term is complete. I feel that NCME is fortunate to have Jim in this position, given his level of technical expertise and his years of experience.

In the coming months, Jim and Susan Brookhart, editor of *EM: IP*, will be working together with help from the Board on an electronic manuscript submission system. More on this to come in upcoming issues of the *Newsletter*.

## NCME Website

A contract for services has been signed with the Rees Group for the purpose of updating and improving the present NCME website, and Rees Group members have begun work on this activity. Look for some changes to the website in the fairly near future.

## EM: IP Issue

I need to apologize for a problem that has occurred with the current issue of *EM: IP*. As you likely know, this issue was quite late getting to press. It was also the issue that contained the NCME Call for Proposals. Well, the issue came out after the deadline for submissions of proposals had occurred, and we were unable to remove the Call from the publication process. So,

my apologies for having some useless material contained in this issue of *EM: IP*. I should note that submission of an appropriate number of manuscripts to fill out issues of *EM: IP* has and continues to be a major problem, and this has been a topic of discussion at Board meetings. On a positive note, lack of a timely Call for Proposals in *EM:IP* seems not to have caused a problem with proposal submissions this year. The program co-chairs were able to place electronic versions of the Call on a number of websites not previously employed, and the outcome has been a good one.

## **Educational Measurement (4<sup>th</sup> edition)**

The volume is now complete and should be available to the membership in October. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Bob Brennan, the editor of this edition, for seeing this edition through to completion. A multitude of horror stories surround the final publication of this edition that I prefer not to get into.

## **Standards and Standards Committee Work**

The Standards Management Committee (Suzanne Lane representing AERA, Wayne Camara representing APA, and Barbara Plake representing NCME) has asked that by October 15 that NCME provide the Management Committee with a recommendation on whether or not to begin work on the next revision to the AERA/APA/NCME *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. The Standards and Test Use Committee, chaired by Doug Becker, has been asked to formulate the recommendation. I can tell you that the recommendation will likely be an affirmative one, and the Standards and Test Use Committee will be using identified needed content now missing in the 1999 *Standards* as the basis for the recommendation.

## **International Standards**

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has voted in the affirmative to begin work on international standards for psychological assessment. The initial version of the standards presented to ISO, which for the most part cover employment testing, were developed by a group of German psychologists. Based on advice provided by the Joint Committee on Testing Practices (JCTP) and the NCME Standards and Test Use Committee, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the US representative to ISO, voted not to begin work on these standards. ANSI will be convening a meeting on September 28 to discuss possible US directions to take that are related to the ISO standards to be developed. Representatives of AERA, APA, and NCME (Doug Becker and me) will be attending this meeting. One issue to be discussed is how the AERA/APA/NCME *Standards* fit in the overall process. There will definitely be more on this to come in upcoming issues of the *Newsletter*.

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## **SO-WHAT KINDS OF MEASUREMENT RELATED CAREER OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE IN HIGHER EDUCATION?**

*Donna L. Sundre, Executive Director, Center for Assessment and Research Studies;  
Professor of Graduate Psychology, James Madison University*

We don't need to look or listen long before hearing and seeing evidence that assessment and accountability have graduated from the K–12 setting and are on the march to college. Several recent reports and monographs (AASC&U, 2006; Dwyer, Millett & Payne, 2006; recent drafts of the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education, in preparation) are calling for increased transparency and accountability in higher education. Fulfilling these mandates will require excellence in applied measurement.

NCME has always provided tremendous support for assessment and measurement specialists in a variety of settings, including higher education. Indeed many NCME members are currently employed at universities and colleges around the world. However, most NCME members working in higher education have fulfilled faculty positions. We are currently witnessing increased demand for assessment practitioners in higher education settings, and NCME has recognized an important role and has responded to this challenge by working to attract a more diverse membership and an expanded vision for the organization. These commitments are consistent with NCME's Mission statement (<http://www.ncme.org/about/mission.cfm>). It cannot be understated that solid measurement skills are prerequisite for sound assessment practice.

I have the pleasure of working at James Madison University, an institution that has been deeply committed to assessment of student learning for almost 20 years. I have found this work to be intellectually stimulating and highly regarded on my own



campus and beyond. JMU has the only PhD Assessment and Measurement program in the United States. We currently have 10 graduates of this doctoral program; a few work in testing and consulting firms. Six of them are employed on college campuses across the nation in Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, and Virginia. They work in community colleges, liberal arts institutions, comprehensives, and research intensive campuses. Only one of these six is in a traditional tenure-track position; the others are working collaboratively with faculty and student affairs professionals on their campuses to learn more about how and what students learn. This is difficult and challenging work; accreditors, policy makers, students, parents and other stakeholders are very interested and increasingly impatient. The skills, competencies, and talents they developed in our program and bring to bear everyday are what NCME is all about.

What might an assessment practitioner be doing in a day of work? I randomly selected a month and year to see what my schedule might involve. I was bitterly disappointed that the month of January was selected, because I assumed that not much would be happening at that time. Here is what I found: I needed to provide a phone reference for a graduate applying for a position at a major University; review a National Science Foundation grant proposal; call colleagues at another institution about an assessment presentation we were planning; meet with a doctoral student about their comprehensive examinations; work on an invited presentation for a University in the Caribbean; attend a Center staff meeting; and pick up my contact lenses. This is on January 10<sup>th</sup>! Later in the week I would attend an Assessment Advisory Committee meeting; meet with three different departments on their assessment designs and instrument development projects; and work on data analysis and reports for two other departments. As I look back over the years, I have never had a boring day. I get to work with faculty from diverse disciplines and preparations, and I have the joy of helping them to learn more about how their students learn. I have seen programs improve with this information. I have seen University resources allocated and reallocated in part on the basis of assessment work. I have also seen programs that as a result of Academic Program Review and careful negotiation were discontinued to benefit the students, the faculty, and the University. I did not make those decisions or assist in negotiations, but I know the assessment research that was conducted helped to inform those discussions and ultimately the quality of decisions made. This is a path with heart; I invite you to explore it and join us.

## References

- American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2006). Value-added assessment: Accountability's new frontier. *Perspectives*, Spring 2006, 1-16.
- Dwyer, C. A., Millett, C. M. & Payne, D. G. (2006). *A culture of evidence: Postsecondary assessment and learning outcomes*. Educational Testing Service: Princeton, NJ.
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## IN MEMORIAM: JANICE DOWD SCHEUNEMAN

Linda Cook & Carol Dwyer, Educational Testing Service

It is with a great deal of sorrow that we inform you that Dr. Janice Dowd Scheuneman, distinguished measurement specialist and educational researcher, passed away on July 10, 2006. All who knew Janice will miss her professionalism, the quality of her contributions to research on the fairness and validity of assessments for women and minorities, her service to the measurement community, and her kindness and respect for her co-workers. At the time of her death, Janice was president of Quality Assurance Services, a consulting organization that she founded in 1997.



Janice began her career in measurement in the Test Department of the Psychological Corporation, now known as Harcourt Assessment, where she researched test bias for the *Metropolitan Readiness Test*. She also was a key contributor to the revision of the *Otis-Lennon School Ability Test* that began in 1975. Janice left the Psychological Corporation in 1978 to begin a distinguished career at Educational Testing Service (ETS). While at ETS, Janice worked in several areas including School and Higher Education Programs, Elementary and Secondary School Programs, and the Center for Occupational and Professional Assessment. She left ETS in 1993 to join the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) where, among other things, she carried out research on patient management problems.

Not only was Janice an extremely prolific researcher who authored numerous articles and book chapters, she also found time to contribute to the measurement community through many professional activities. Janice was an APA Fellow in both Division 5 (Evaluation, Measurement, and Statistics) and Division 15 (Educational Psychology). She was also a commissioner for the National Commission for Certifying Agencies from 2004 until the time of her death. Janice served on the editorial boards of

the *Journal of Educational Measurement* and *Applied Measurement in Education* and she served as a reviewer of manuscripts for over 15 refereed journals.

Janice was an extraordinary human being who managed both her career and her personal life with grace and humor. She was a loyal friend who lived her life to the fullest and our lives were enriched by knowing her.

Janice is survived by her companion of over 20 years, Joel Buitenkant, her two sons, Joel Scheuneman of New York City and the Rev. David Scheuneman of Las Vegas, and her three grandchildren, Alia, Roniel, and Oriol. The family has asked that any donations be directed to the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance ([www.ovariancancer.org](http://www.ovariancancer.org)).

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## LEGAL CORNER: NCLB PEER REVIEW UPDATE

*S.E. Phillips, Consultant*

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) has completed peer reviews of state content standards and assessment programs under NCLB and issued a letter to each state summarizing the results. The USDOE decisions were based on peer reviews by three experts and in-house staff reviews of materials and evidence submitted by each state. Some states were re-reviewed after submitting additional evidence. The results as of July 1, 2006 placed states in seven categories including three approval categories (14 states), three approval pending categories (33 states) and one not approved category (two states). Ten states were notified that a portion of their administrative funding (10% - 25% varying by category) will be withheld and diverted to local school districts because they failed to fully comply with NCLB testing provisions. Other states may have funding withheld in the future if they fail to meet deadlines in their plans for achieving compliance by the end of the 2006-07 school year. One state (MS) received a one-year extension due to the exceptional and uncontrollable circumstances of hurricane Katrina. For each decision category, the criteria, major compliance issues, required state actions, consequences (if any), and list of states receiving that designation are outlined below.

### Full Approval

- **Criteria:** satisfies all NCLB statutory and regulatory requirements because the program includes academic content and student achievement standards in reading/language arts, math and science, alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and assessments in grades 3-8 and one high school grade plus alternate assessments in reading and math aligned to the grade-level content standards
- **Major Compliance Issues:** none
- **Required State Actions:** submit for review any significant changes
- **Consequences:** none
- **List of States (4):** MD, OK, TN, WV

### Full Approval with Recommendations

- **Criteria:** satisfies all NCLB statutory and regulatory requirements but some elements of the system could be improved
- **Major Compliance Issues:** none; recommendations include strengthening the alternate assessment system, finishing elements of science assessments, further study of the validity and effectiveness of *accommodations* for students with disabilities and English learners, CBT comparability studies
- **Required State Actions:** consider recommendations; submit for review any significant changes
- **Consequences:** none
- **List of States (6):** AZ, DE, IN, NC, SC, UT

### Approval Expected

- **Criteria:** based on information submitted to date, compliant system administered in 2005-06 but some elements not completed by the July 1, 2006 deadline
- **Major Compliance Issues:** complete remaining elements, e.g., standard setting, alignment studies, technical documentation
- **Required State Actions:** within 30 days, submit a plan for meeting remaining requirements
- **Consequences:** condition on FY2006 Title I, Part A grant award until evidence submitted and approved
- **List of States (4):** AK, CT, LA, MA

## Approval Pending – no withholding, Level 1

- **Criteria:** one fundamental component does not meet statutory or regulatory requirements plus other evidence or documentation issues that can be corrected by the 2006-07 test administration
- **Major Compliance Issues:** primarily alternate assessment issues including alignment to grade-level content standards, documentation of standard setting, separately valid reading and math scores, unavailability in some grades
- **Required State Actions:** within 25 days, submit plan with timeline for correcting deficiencies by 2006-07 administration; bi-monthly progress reports beginning September 2006
- **Consequences:** mandatory oversight; withhold 10% of FY2006 Title I, Part A administrative funds if not meet timeline in plan
- **List of States (11):** AL, IA, MI, NH, NJ, NY, ND, OH, RI, VT, VA

## Approval Pending – no withholding, Level 2

- **Criteria:** two fundamental components missing or do not meet statutory or regulatory requirements plus other evidence or documentation issues that can be corrected by the 2006-07 test administration
- **Major Compliance Issues:** alignment of regular and alternate assessments to grade-level content and achievement standards, appropriateness of accommodations, comparability of EL assessments, technical quality and documentation, lack of performance level descriptors
- **Required State Actions:** within 25 days, submit plan with timeline for correcting deficiencies by 2006-07 administration; bi-monthly progress reports beginning September 2006
- **Consequences:** mandatory oversight; withhold 15% of FY2006 Title I, Part A administrative funds if not meet timeline in plan (note: 1 state plus DC also had conditions not previously met under the more limited IASA; if not met by this fall, 25% withholding)
- **List of States (14):** AR, CA, CO, FL, GA, ID, MO, NV, NM, OR, PA, WA, WI, WY (plus DC & Puerto Rico)

## Approval Pending – withholding of funds

- **Criteria:** three or more fundamental components missing or do not meet statutory or regulatory requirements plus other evidence or documentation issues that can be corrected by the 2006-07 test administration
- **Major Compliance Issues:** incomplete evidence for newly-administered tests, alignment, technical quality, inclusion, alternate assessments, EL assessment, standard setting
- **Required State Actions:** within 25 days, submit plan with timeline for correcting deficiencies by 2006-07 administration; bi-monthly progress reports beginning September 2006
- **Consequences:** mandatory oversight; withhold 10% of FY2006 Title I, Part A administrative funds (state has 20 business days to show cause in writing why funds should not be withheld) & withhold an additional 10% if not meet timeline in plan
- **List of States (8):** HI, IL, KS, KY, MN, MT, SD, TX

## Not Approved

- **Criteria:** several fundamental components missing or do not meet statutory or regulatory requirements and evidence will not be able to administer a fully-approved assessment system in 2006-07
- **Major Compliance Issues:** multiple technical quality issues, non-augmented SAT at high school; evidence local assessment systems meet same rigorous standards as statewide assessments
- **Required State Actions:** compliance agreement including detailed plan and specific timeline to meet all requirements as soon as feasible but within 3 years
- **Consequences:** USDOE hearing to determine why compliance is not feasible until a future date; publication of findings of noncompliance and substance of the compliance agreement in the Federal Register; withhold 25% of FY2006 Title I, Part A administrative funds (state has 20 business days to show cause in writing why funds should not be withheld)
- **List of States (2):** ME, NE

In their letters, states with compliance issues were provided a list of additional evidence to be submitted to receive full approval. The list was organized under seven topics including academic content standards, academic achievement standards, full assessment system, technical quality, alignment, inclusion and reporting. Recurring themes not mentioned above included diverse stakeholder representation, including EL and SD, in content standards, item review and standard setting activities; formal state adoption of content standards and performance standards; external alignment studies; monitoring the use of accommodations for ELs and SDs; and parent notification for students assessed on alternate achievement standards. If submitted, the peers reviewed and provided comments on modified assessments for SDs with persistent academic difficulties

but USDOE stated that these assessments will not be approved until final regulations are issued. States receiving full approval were also notified that approval of their assessment systems under NCLB was not a determination of compliance with Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, the ADA or the IDEA.

Some states have expressed reservations about the limited time available to prepare documentation for peer review, whether all states have been judged by uniform and consistent standards, and the authority of the USDOE to withhold funding. Connecticut has filed suit challenging the adequacy of NCLB funding for the mandates it imposes. However, states in full compliance may apply for additional flexibility, including reversing the order of school choice and tutoring offered to students in program improvement schools, and two states (NC & TN) have been selected for a growth model pilot. Questions concerning state differences in minimum AYP subgroup sizes and participation rate anomalies remain unresolved.

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## **EVENTS OF REGIONAL INTEREST**

### **The 22nd Annual Washington State Assessment Conference**

The Washington Educational Research Association and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction present the 22nd Annual Washington State Assessment Conference: Preparing ALL Students for the 21st Century. The event will be held from December 7-8, 2006 (Pre-conference December 6) at the Seattle Airport Hilton Hotel Conference Center (17620 Pacific Highway South).

The keynote presenters will be Kati Haycock on Thursday and Pedro Noguera on Friday. Kati Haycock is the director of the Washington DC-based Education Trust. The Trust advocates for youth, and provides hands-on assistance to educators working to improve student achievement at all levels. Pedro Noguera is an urban sociologist, and professor at New York University. His work has focused on ways that schools are influenced by social and economic conditions in the urban environment.

On Thursday and Friday the conference will offer over 50 breakout sessions presented by local educators. Members of the OSPI staff will have sessions that review and present the latest information and plans from Olympia. There will also be pre-conference workshops on Wednesday that will be packed with useful ideas and information on current topics.

In addition to the above, the WERA annual Spring Conference will be held at the same location on March 28-30, 2007. Theme and keynoters have not yet been identified.

For further information, contact Leonard Winchell, WERA executive secretary, at [lenwwa@aol.com](mailto:lenwwa@aol.com), or the WERA Web Site: [www.wera-web.org](http://www.wera-web.org).

### **Georgia Educational Research Association (GERA) Annual Meeting**

The Executive Board of the Georgia Educational Research Association invites you to attend the 31st Annual Meeting of the GERA to be held on Friday, October 27, 2006, at the Coastal Georgia Center in Savannah, Georgia. In concurrence with our national organization, the American Educational Research Association, the theme of the annual meeting of GERA, 2006, is The World of Educational Quality. Our Luncheon Program will focus on the future of GERA as a vital resource for the educational community in our state. Your continued membership and involvement are essential to the vitality of GERA, a state affiliate of the American Educational Research Association and one of Georgia's most dynamic research organizations. The broad range of disciplines represented by GERA membership includes education, psychology, statistics, sociology, history, economics, philosophy, anthropology, and political science. Join us at the Coastal Georgia Center in Savannah to share your research in progress, to attend and participate in multiple research presentations as well as to meet with your valued colleagues from around the state to collaborate, plan, and renew friendships. Please mark your calendar and inform your colleagues and students of the opportunity to attend and present at this year's meeting.



## The 37th Annual Conference of the Northeastern Educational Research Association

The 37th Annual Conference of the Northeastern Educational Research Association will be held October 18-20, 2006 at the Hudson Valley Resort and Spa in Kerhonkson, NY. This year's conference theme is "Scientifically-based Research: Will it really help us reform education?" The Keynote Speaker is Dr. Michael Nettles, a nationally-renowned education policy expert. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, there will be a pre-conference session entitled "Causal Modeling in Educational Research: What Works & What Doesn't?" Please visit the following website: <http://www.nera-education.org/conference05.html> for general information and <http://www.nera-education.org/presession06.html> for conference workshop information.

## The 2006 Virginia Assessment Group Fall Conference

The Virginia Assessment Group (VAG) fall conference will be held from November 13-15, 2006 at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center in Staunton, Virginia. For more information, please visit: <http://www.virginiaassessment.org>.

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## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SYSTEM AND CULTURE OF THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS OF CHINA<sup>1</sup>

*Xiang Bo Wang, The College Board*

### Scenes and Emotions from the 2006 College Entrance Examination of China

On June 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006, over 9,520,000 high school graduates throughout China took this year's annual college entrance examination (CEE) (Dai Jiagan, 2006). As indicated by Picture 1 (pictures begin on page 13), this year's CEE consisted of five subject tests: Chinese Language Test in the morning of the June 7<sup>th</sup>; Mathematics Test in the afternoon; Synthesis Test for the Liberal Arts Track or Science and Technology Track, respectively in the morning of the June 8<sup>th</sup>; Foreign Language Test in the afternoon. The tests in the morning were 2.5 hours long, while those in the afternoon, 2 hours.



Although the first subject test of this year's CEE, the Chinese Language Test, was scheduled to start at 9:00 a.m., there was already a sea of parents, relatives, and examinees at 7:30 a.m., in the entrance square outside the campus gate of the People's University Affiliated Middle School in Beijing. Eavesdropping on various conversations there revealed a wide spectrum of wishes. "Do not be too nervous, OK? You will be doing fine." "Don't be too careless. And read the items carefully." "You have worked hard for an entire year and the real tests are here. Make yourself and us proud." "Work on the test items carefully. Your future depends on these tests. I know that you will do well."

Right outside the campus gate stood a row of large white display boards reminding examinees of the test regulations, examinee obligations, and examples of violations (Picture 3). Beyond the signs in one corner of the entrance square, an ambulance was parked, ready to tend to any emergency. Another fully air-conditioned recreational vehicle welcomed anyone wishing to seek temporary refuge from the early summer heat.

One by one, uniformed campus security guards checked the test registration and personal identification cards of examinees (Picture 4) filing into the restricted areas of campus for the CEE. Only test kits made of transparent plastic bags filled with pens, pencils, erasers, and rulers, as well as bicycles for personal transportation were allowed in. Before reaching their designated test rooms, examinees walked along a shaded path lined with large wooden boards displaying both welcomes and reminders: "Welcome to participants of the 2006 CEE," "Check every item and response carefully," and so on (Picture 5).

During the CEE season, there tends to be society-wide empathy and support for examinees. Reports include police running red lights in order to send an examinee to a test site on time (Law Star, 2005), helping examinees to fetch their identification cards from their homes (Dahew.com, 2005), and even helping, with permission, to "break" into an optometrist's office to fit a pair of glasses for an examinee (People, 2004), all of which have triggered both commendation and criticism. The author saw an

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<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to thank Director Zhang Jin of the National Educational Examination Authority (NEEA) of China for his recommendation to observe the 2006 college entrance examinations of China; Carrie Dirks for her careful proof editing; and Dr. Ning Han of NEEA for his valuable review.

illegally parked car (Picture 6) around a corner of the entrance square with a sign saying “CEE Examinee, please pardon me.” It was not ticketed, even with a heavy traffic police presence.

Considerably after 9:30 a.m., there was not a single examinee left in the entrance square, but scores of parents and relatives could still be seen sitting on the sidewalk, anxiously and patiently waiting for the first glimpse of their children’s expressions coming out of the exam (Picture 7).

## **History of the College Entrance Examination of China**

China held its first national imperial examination, called “Ke Ju”, equivalent to the modern day college entrance examination, as early as 605, in the Sui Dynasty. The purpose was to select civil service officials (Wikipedia). This imperial examination was considered the world’s first standardized educational examination. Imperial examinations lasted over 1,300 years until 1905 during the Qing Dynasty when it was bogged down by internal uprisings and foreign invasions. Modern college entrance examinations were introduced in the Republic of China and continued into the People’s Republic of China until 1966 when the so-called “Cultural Revolution” begun.

In addition to being devastating to China’s economic, scientific and technological developments, the “Cultural Revolution” plunged the entire educational system of China into complete chaos. High school graduates were sent down to the countryside to be reeducated by peasants. China’s college entrance examinations were completely abolished, and its universities and colleges, almost completely shut down between 1966 and 1968. Between 1969 and 1976, China’s higher educational system was partially restored by only admitting workers, peasants and soldiers – those who were considered “politically right”. Without any college entrance examinations, students from the three “politically right” social classes with as little as partial elementary education were enrolled in universities and colleges.

In 1976, the ten-year “cultural revolution” came to an end after Mao Zedong, then Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, died, and Deng Xiaoping came into office. As one of his sweeping reforms, Deng comprehensively and swiftly reinstated the systems of China’s college entrance examinations and university education. The year 2006 marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the official end of the “Cultural Revolution” and the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China’s college entrance examinations since its reestablishment. Nowadays, the college entrance examination system tests the largest numbers of college applicants in the world (People, 2006) and it is only natural that there exists a strong “testing culture” in China.

## **Importance of the College Entrance Examination of China**

To any American familiar with college entrance examinations in the U.S., the description of the testing atmosphere in China may appear too far fetched to be believed, yet it is common throughout China during the CEE season every year. College entrance examinations in China (and in several other Asian countries such as Korea and Japan) are so important that it is commonly dubbed as a “once-in-a-life-time” or a “one-test-to-determine-a-life” examination for most Chinese high school graduates (China Youth on Line, 2006; China Science and Technology University, 2006).

The best way to comprehend the importance of China’s CEE is to understand four facts. First, it is offered only once per year. If you miss it or fail to perform to expectations, you have to wait an entire year to retake it. Second, given the high demand of the current economic and technological growth of China for technical skills and the fierce competition for employment, a college education is paramount to securing a financially promising job. Third, given the enormous number of CEE examinees and the relatively small number of examinees admitted—especially into the more prestigious first-tier or “key” universities—the competition for high CEE scores is intense. As indicated by Table 1, among the 9.5 million examinees in 2006, only 2.60 million (about 27%) would be admitted to four-year universities, while another 2.70 million (about 28%), to three-year or lower colleges and technical schools (China Education and Research Network, 2006a). In other words, 4.27 million (about 45%) of the entire 9.5 million examinees would not be admitted into any institution of higher learning beyond high school. Finally, in order to maximize the chance of CEE success, most high school students spend most of their senior year studying tirelessly for this exam. Such test preparation normally means 12 to 16 hours of rigorous daily routines of study, review, practice tests, and organized competitions on simulated CEE tests, often leaving little time for entertainment and vacation (Sina.com, 2006a). Very often, serious sports activity is out of the question because schools are afraid of the liability of injuring students, which may completely prevent them from even participating in the CEE. Many students who did not succeed in a previous year repeat such a test preparation process. Of the 9.5 million CEE examinees in 2006, over 2.83 million (or 30%) were repeat test takers.



Table 1: Summary of 2006 Examinees

Category	Number	Number	Ratio
2006 CEE Examinee Population	9,520,000		
2006 HS Graduate Examinees		6,690,000	
Repeat Examinees from Previous Years		2,830,000	
To be Admitted to 4-Yr Universities	2,600,000		27.31%
To be Admitted to 3-Yr Colleges or Lower Institutes	2,700,000		28.36%
Total Examinees not to be Admitted to any institution of higher learning	4,220,000		44.33%

## Consequences of Intense College Entrance Examination Preparation

One natural outcome of the intense test preparation is the insatiable national appetite for practice test items to work on, which includes not only those made by teachers, test preparation “gurus” and companies (XinHuaNet, 2005), but also all those that have appeared on all previous CEE tests. In China, all CEE test items are completely disclosed and posted on the web shortly after administration. This unconditional disclosure makes it impossible to conduct item pre-testing and test equating through common anchor items, common psychometric practices in the US.

How are the difficulty levels and other psychometric properties of China’s CEE tests controlled without the possibility of item pre-testing? Based on this author’s personal communication with a number of Chinese testing officials and experts, it is mostly subjective and experiential with limited piloting. A common test development practice in China consists of five components: (1) to form a test development committee including an appropriate number of content experts; (2) to survey and analyze all previous CEE test items; (3) to write a set of unique test items that meet curricular guidelines and test specifications but cannot bear any close resemblance to any of the previous CEE test items; (4) pilot them with a few select high school students (mostly of high ability, because the main objective of China’s CEE is to discriminate examinees of high ability), and (5) revise and assemble the final version(s) after collective review. Due to the impossibility of serious pre-testing and test equating, it is inevitable for the means and distributions of CEE scores to fluctuate (China Youth on Line, 2006b), sometimes substantially, both nationally and regionally, even though efforts have been made to target CEE difficulty levels between 0.55 and 0.65 in terms of the common p values, according to Director General Dai of NEEA (Beijing Daily, 2006). With the decentralization movement of China’s CEE (to be discussed later), various issues regarding score comparability, validity and interpretation across various provinces and regions of China (which are authorized to develop their own provincial CEE tests) will become increasingly acute.

## Test Security Measures of China College Entrance Examination

Given the high stakes nature of the CEE, test security is paramount to Chinese government at all levels. Since all information related to CEE tests and items is considered a national secret, test security is closely monitored and violations are investigated and prosecuted swiftly and forcefully by China’s Ministries of Education, Public Security, Communication, and Justice (China Education and Research Network, 2006b and 2006c). It is a common practice that all personnel involved in CEE test development are normally sequestered from their relatives and friends from the beginning of the test development until the CEE is over. Stealing or revealing any information prematurely is punishable by two to four years of imprisonment plus hefty fines (China Education and Research Network, 2006d). Test materials are often transported and guarded by police (Picture 9) and/or specially designated government officials (CSOnline.com, 2005). Some strict measures are currently in practice in order to prevent mid-process tampering. Examples of the handling of sensitive test materials include answer-sheet scanning by police cadets (Picture 10); electronic imaging of all constructive responses without student identification for scoring; random

distributions of electronic images to raters (Wang, 2006), and the complete on-line disclosure of CEE scores of the examinees who have been admitted to universities and colleges for reasons of maximum college admission transparency and equity, as part of the “sun-shine project” (China Ministry of Education, 2006).

## **Current College Entrance Examination Structure of China**

After several rounds of CEE reforms, especially during the past 10 years, China’s current CEE has adopted what is commonly referred to as “3+X” system (China Education on Line, 2001). The “3” stands for the three core subject tests that are required of all college applicants: Chinese language, mathematics and a foreign language (normally English for the great majority of examinees). While it is obvious that the Chinese language be a core subject test, the reasons for the latter two reflect the national educational goal of modern China: “Education must face the world and it must face the future!” This goal was first underwritten by the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, who was often credited for jump-starting modern education in China and opening China to the West. It is engrained in Chinese educational philosophy that mathematics is the foundation for all other higher learning, scientific inquiry, and technological achievements, while foreign language is the key to connect with the outside world.

Also called a “synthesis test,” the “X” component of the Chinese CEE is a combination of subject tests that are grouped for students pursuing either liberal-arts or science-and-technology tracks. The subject tests for the liberal-arts are political science, history and geography, while those for science-and-technology include physics, chemistry and biology. The rationale behind such synthesis examinations is that all branches of modern liberal arts, science and technology infiltrate one another, and the modern CEE should assess examinee ability to synthesize and apply diverse knowledge (For a look at the 2006 Beijing science-track synthesis examination, refer to NetEase 2006).

## **Recent Decentralization of the College Entrance Examination of China**

Given the fact that China has always had a strong national curriculum and guidelines for all its primary and secondary education, China’s CEE has been highly centralized for the most part since its reinstatement. Until five years ago, there used to be just one set of national CEE tests developed under the leadership China’s NEEA (a division of China’s Ministry of Education) with representation from mainland China’s twenty two provinces, four municipalities and five autonomous regions. However, the past five years have witnessed large-scale decentralization of the CEE. This year, only 16 provinces and autonomous regions used NEEA’s national uniform set of CEE tests, and all the others developed, administered and scored their own CEE “3+X” subject tests independently within their judicial territories, while adhering to the national and local curricular guidelines (Personal communication with Dr. Ning Han of NEEA of China and Professor Ruoling Zheng of Xiamen University of China, 2006). The rationale for decentralization is to allow the CEE to more directly reflect education and instruction at the regional or provincial level. As a result, the actual content, format, and scoring of the numerous regional versions of the CEE subject tests are bound to differ from one another.

## **Common Approach to Evaluate and Admit Examinees**

How do universities evaluate and select examinees in the absence of comparable scores from different regional CEE tests which also vary substantially in content, format and score scales? For decades, the common way to select students in China has mainly been through a combination of quota and top-down selection approaches. First, through the coordination of China’s NEEA, all universities and colleges pre-determine their target numbers of examinees to be admitted from both their home provinces and regions as well as from outside, respectively. Similar to state universities in the U.S., the numbers of home-region students tend to substantially exceed those from other regions. Second, on the basis of different score distributions from different CEE tests of different provinces and regions, universities and colleges would declare different cut scores, and select those who have applied to them and whose CEE scores have met their cut scores. This two-part process is often repeated two to three times starting from high to low cut offs until target admission quotas are satisfied (Sina.com, 2006b). In addition, universities and colleges also admit small numbers of students with outstanding national achievements in science, technology, liberal arts and sports with or without the CEE process.

## **Closing Remarks**

With rapid and vast economic, scientific and technological progress under the increasingly more democratic leadership of the recent Chinese government comes unprecedented freedom of speech in both print and digital media. Never before have there been so much public scrutiny and debate about the efficacy, validity, and fairness of today’s college entrance examination

system of China. As a result, both the national and provincial educational examination authorities have been actively engaged in experimenting with testing reforms and technical innovation as well as learning about psychometrics from abroad. For example, in June 2006, the author personally witnessed a highly advanced computer system that separates portions of answer sheets with examinee responses to constructive response items from portions of answer sheets with examinee identification, randomly distributes the former to raters for scoring via secure Internet. Such a system drastically cuts down the possibility of test security breaches.

In spite of flurries of new CEE developments, one clear deficiency of China's CEE system as the author has observed is the severe shortage of technical reports regarding the reliability, validity and even basic psychometric properties of CEE tests by both the NEEA and all the other provincial educational testing organizations which develop and administer their own CEE tests. It is the author's sincere hope that China will share more about the results of such reforms and innovations so that the rest of the world can both learn and benefit from its experience.

At 4:00pm, June 8, one hour before the last CEE subject test was over, the entrance square of the People's University Affiliated Middle School was again filled, all the way to the side walk, with anxious parents and relatives (Picture 10). At 5:00pm sharp, the 2006 CEE was officially closed and at 5:20pm, examinees started pouring out of the campus gate to be greeted by their long waiting parents and relatives (Picture 11). Examinees expressed relief that the grueling one-year process of CEE preparation and testing was over (Picture 13); concern over some of their responses (Picture 14); comfort to parents (Picture 15); happiness with their performance (Pictures 16); and confidence about their future (Picture 17). "Mom, I think that I did well!" exclaimed one girl to her mother. "Dad and Mom, I am set for Qinghua University<sup>2</sup>," shouted another boy happily to his parents picking him up in a black Audi sedan. The press was scrambling to interview examinees (Picture 18) about their feelings toward this year's CEE. Although American examinees would demonstrate similar emotions after an important examination, what is distinctively Chinese are the special culture and the close bond among examinees, parents and society as formed by the CEE process and system.

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<sup>2</sup> Qinghua University is China's equivalent to America's MIT.

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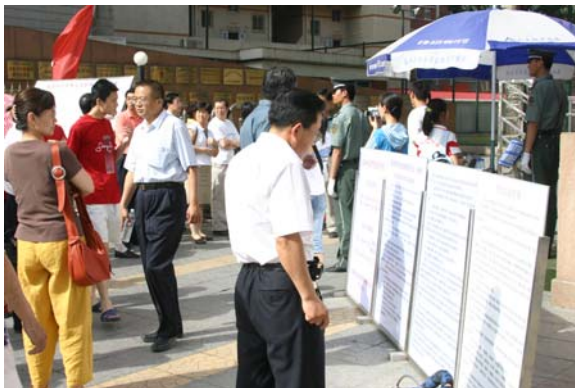
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六月七日(星期三)	
上午: 9:00—11:30	语 文
下午: 3:00—5:00	数 学
六月八日(星期四)	
上午: 9:00—11:30	文科综合 理科综合
下午: 3:00—5:00	外 语
海淀区高招办高考期间举报电话 62562931	

**Picture 1: A sample CEE test schedule in Beijing.**



**Picture 2: Examinees and their relatives at the entrance to the restricted examination rooms.**



**Picture 3: White boards displaying test regulations, examinee obligations, examples of violations, and penalties.**



**Picture 4: Checking examinee identification.**



**Picture 5: Examinees walking through boards of welcome and reminders.**



**Picture 6: An illegally parked car with a sign: "CEE examinee. Please pardon me".**





**Picture 7: Anxious parents and relatives waiting outside campus gate for examinees to come out of test rooms.**



**Picture 8: Historical imperial examination site with hundreds of small individual test rooms, each sequestering one examinee, during weeks of imperial examinations.**



**Picture 9: Police guarding a CEE scanning site.**



**Picture 10: Police cadets scanning answer sheets of constructive test items.**



**Picture11: Parents and relatives anxiously waiting on the sidewalk.**



**Picture 12: Examinees were greeted by their parents and relatives.**





**Picture 13: It was such a relief as a father helped to carry his daughter's bag.**



**Picture 14: Let me check a little more.**



**Picture 15: Mom, I think I did it!**



**Picture 16: Comfort and satisfaction.**



**Picture 17: Done and confident!**



**Picture 18: Two examinees being interviewed by journalists.**