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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

A Milestone Affords a Look Back

Some say it's a sign of advancing age when you start talking about how things were "back in the day." But it's important sometimes to look back in order to appreciate progress that has been made.

The retirement of Susan Case, NCBE's Director of Testing, is an occasion to look back and marvel at the accomplishments that Susan and her able staff in the Testing Department have achieved over Susan's 12 years with NCBE.

Susan came to the Conference with a wealth of knowledge and experience. Her undergraduate majors were mathematics and mathematical statistics, and her M.S. and Ph.D. degrees are in measurement and evaluation. Prior to joining NCBE, she served for 25 years at the National Board of Medical Examiners with responsibilities for research and for medical licensure and specialty board examination programs.

During her years at the Conference, Susan showed a unique ability to educate laypersons in the language and mysteries of psychometrics. Her entertaining and informative PowerPoint presentations at NCBE's Annual Bar Admissions Conferences are legend. Susan was able to keep a roomful of bar examiners engaged and enlightened on a Friday afternoon while she prodded them with the all-important testing concepts of sampling, reliability, validity, scaling, and rounding.

Susan's highly readable and relevant Testing Columns in the *Bar Examiner* exemplify her skill in educating. She leaves behind a compendium of work that those of us in bar admissions will return to again and again after her retirement.

Among the many accomplishments that Susan oversaw during her 12 years as Director of Testing was bringing in-house the test development operations for the MBE, the MEE, and the MPRE. Previously, the questions for each of these examinations had been generated by drafting committees overseen by NCBE and ACT; ACT had then handled question editing and test development.

What did bringing these three exams in-house mean for Susan and her staff? It meant that all test development work for the four NCBE exams—the MBE, MEE, MPT, and MPRE—was now handled by NCBE staff members. Questions continued to be generated by NCBE's drafting committees, but test development steps were all conducted by NCBE staff. These steps included submitting the questions for outside expert review, editing and pretesting the questions, assessing their performance, and tracking equators (reused questions used to scale the current exam to previous exams in order to ensure a consistent degree of difficulty) for the MBE and MPRE. NCBE staff also shipped the finished product to the jurisdictions for administration. And this work was done in addition to overseeing the scoring of the exams and con-

ducting the scaling work for the MBE for a number of jurisdictions. Needless to say, during Susan's time as Director of Testing, NCBE's Testing Department grew significantly—expanding from a staff of one part-time psychometrician to the current Testing and Research Department staff of 15 people.

Another significant accomplishment during Susan's tenure was the completion of NCBE's job analysis. Organizations that develop licensure examinations need to periodically assess whether what is tested accurately reflects the knowledge and skills that are needed by newly licensed professionals. In order to protect the public, the licensing exam must reflect what the professional needs to know. Under Susan's leadership, NCBE conducted a broad-ranging survey of new attorneys that sought to find out exactly what type of work new lawyers do, as well as what knowledge, skills, and abilities these new lawyers believe they need to carry out their work.

The data that was elicited from the job analysis survey is extensive. The results of the survey are being studied by NCBE's Long Range Planning Committee. The information gleaned from this job analysis will be used to evaluate NCBE's existing exams and to decide if additional content areas should be tested or if additional skills should be assessed. The results will serve for some time as the guide for developing and changing exam products in the future. The job analysis also provides reassurance to the jurisdictions that use NCBE's tests that what is tested on the bar exam is in fact consistent with what new lawyers need to be prepared to do.

Susan was also the moving force behind the development of NCBE's Online Practice Exams, one of the most important tools available to examinees to prepare for the MBE and MPRE. NCBE now offers four Online Practice Exams for the MBE and one for the MPRE—all available at low cost to examinees. The exams consist of recently administered MBE and MPRE questions, and the answers—correct and incorrect—are accompanied by an explanation of the law that articulates for the examinee why each possible answer is either right or wrong.



Susan and her staff always made themselves available to assist jurisdictions. They were always ready to provide expert advice when issues arose such as scoring challenges or alleged cheating incidents that needed to be analyzed from a psychometric perspective; or when jurisdictions undertook changes to scoring, scaling, or other test-related practices.

Susan's 12 years as NCBE's Director of Testing do indeed reflect significant accomplishments. Susan professionalized the Testing Department and moved the Conference from one largely driven by volunteers to one that has the resources and expertise to produce high-quality test instruments and to do so in a way that is cost-efficient.

From the perspective of the jurisdictions using NCBE's tests, by no means does Susan's departure mean a loss of the services and expertise that were available under her leadership. Jurisdictions can continue to rely on Testing Department staff, now under the capable guidance of Mark Albanese, former Director of Research, who, as Director of Testing and Research, will now oversee both departments. NCBE's psychometric, testing, and measurement experts will continue to be available to the jurisdictions for all their testing-related needs and to answer all their questions.

The legacy that Susan leaves behind is a rich one—one that serves all of us in the bar examining community. And best of all, what Susan accomplished remains in place to serve this community in the future.

Susan, thank you for all you did. We wish you the very best in the next chapter of your life. 🍷

Best regards to all.

Sincerely,

Margaret Fuller Corneille