

## The Following Comments Reflect Previous Test Takers' Experiences

### Preparing for the Exam

- I studied alone due to the lack of a formal study group. I don't see studying alone as a disadvantage other than that there is an absence of other perspectives. I used the three texts recommended by ACHE and concentrated on *The Well-Managed Healthcare Organization* by John Griffith. I also used the tutorial provided by ACHE. Specifically, the questions and answers provided in the tutorial served as a tool for review in the texts. The best advice I could offer is to set aside an hour per day approximately four months prior to the test. I used the time to read chapters, review sample questions, and take notes for further investigation. Two weeks prior to the test date, I reviewed text only and concentrated on areas that I knew were professionally challenging. The day before the Examination, I leisurely thumbed through the texts, questions and answers, and other materials to mentally prepare for the different topics. In summary, I don't think there is a magic formula for studying for this Examination. It's difficult and requires a great deal of knowledge, **much of which is learned on the job**. The text reading requires self-discipline and a set pattern for studying. Finally, I carried one of the texts with me on a daily basis. The book served as a reminder that passing the Examination was a defining moment in my professional life.
- Think globally as you read each question. Determine which answer best describes the situation. Two or more answers may seem appropriate and could be justified, but make sure you consider which one is most inclusive. Do not allow your past experiences in a particular situation to cloud your decision when answering a more global question. Read *The Well-Managed Healthcare Organization* textbook. This textbook provides a good review of each management area covered on the Exam. Keep abreast of articles in healthcare journals. Get a good night's sleep before the Exam. You want to be alert. For areas that you are not familiar with, find an expert in that area and ask him or her to give you a 15-minute update on the current topics of interest in their area of expertise. For those considering the computerized Exam, do not allow your fears of a computer to keep you from taking the Exam. The program is very easy to use and allows you to mark questions that you would like to review again at the end of the Exam. A huge plus is that you get your results immediately.

- My preparation strategy for the Exam included two elements: First, I attended an Advancement Information Session that was hosted by our local Regent. I think that this was very valuable in order to put the Exam in context with the overall advancement process, as well as to explore the “personality of the Exam” and discuss test-taking strategy. In addition, I used ACHE’s Reference Manual to review the topics that would be covered and to run through the sample test questions. While my preparation as outlined above helped me navigate the test process and style, I think that the knowledge base that I used to actually answer the questions really came from my educational background and work experience. In other words, the work I did in advance of the Exam helped me in the process of taking the test, but skill sets that the Exam evaluates are, in my case, the result of experience and education. Since I didn't utilize any books or other knowledge tools, I really don't have any suggestions as to what materials would be good study resources.
- Well I must say, I have been procrastinating taking the Exam for some time. In some ways, this probably helped because I did read the books and worked over time to take the test. I did read the books suggested on the ACHE website. I took the practice test on the website. In addition, I printed off the Reference Manual and took the practice test and read through the Manual. I believe in continuing education so I try to attend the annual ACHE meeting as often as possible. I must say the Exam was very well rounded and the Reference Manual was helpful in that it keeps you focusing on the many areas instead of focusing on one area. Finally, I did not cram: I ate well before the Exam and got a good night's sleep. I did not take the course or the self-study program offered. I wondered prior to the Exam if this would be a mistake, but I am a reader and pretty self-disciplined, so it turned out ok.
- I took a great prep course in October 2008—the Board of Governors Exam Review Course—and then didn't get around to taking the test until this spring. So I had this notebook of materials from the 2008 prep course, and read through it once on a Sunday afternoon and took the test on a Tuesday morning. So I did study to refresh my memory of the material covered by the prep course, but I would highly recommend taking the prep course and then taking the test shortly thereafter.

- As promised, here is how I prepared for the BOG Exam. I think my practical experience of almost 20 years also helped in areas that were not covered by text book or online material.

1. Printed the online reference material from the ACHE website for the BOG Exam and highlighted all the pertinent information for later review.
2. Purchased *The Well-Managed Healthcare Organization*, sixth edition, and read it cover to cover. Again I highlighted all the pertinent information and terminology for later review.
3. Three weeks before the Exam, I reviewed the highlighted portions of the book and reference materials. Also, did some online review of healthcare finance materials (various sources).
4. Reviewed the sample questions and took the practice Exam 2 weeks prior to the test.
5. The week before the Exam, I took "book notes" on the important highlighted sections of the text book. This was a study habit from my college days.
6. Took the practice Exam again. Did some additional light review of finance issues.
7. Reviewed my book notes a few days before the Exam.
8. Took it easy the day before the Exam and really did not review very much.
9. Good night's sleep.

This was pretty much how it went. This all occurred over an eight-week period.

## Study Hints and Practical Tips

- Be sure to read each question carefully.
- Read all responses for each question before selecting an answer.
- There is no added penalty for guessing, so answer every question.
- Skip difficult questions and return to them later. The computerized Exam allows you to mark questions to return to later.
- Do not go back and change answers; your first hunch is most often correct.
- Remember: The Exam is national in scope and is not defined by individual states and their laws or regulations.
- Be aware of critical words that change the direction of the question. Things like is not; all but; least likely; and except for.
- Watch for absolute words (always & never) in the question. They signal extra scrutiny.
- Use the review time you have to its best purpose. When you review, focus on major themes, not obscure facts.
- Listen to what your body is telling you. You cannot fight autonomic responses and win. Take a minute or two to regroup, refresh, refocus and breathe.
- You have enough time—if you use your time wisely.
- **The Board of Governors Exam is a recognition test, not a recall test.** You'll be asked to draw logical outcomes from known concepts.
- Don't over-read or over-analyze the test question. The Exam writers want you to take each question at face value.
- Stay focused on the task and keep moving.
- Keep the test and its outcome in perspective.