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RELATIONSHIP OF SELF-EFFICACY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM  
CRITICAL NEED AREAS WITH FIRST SEMESTER ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A Dissertation presented for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Teacher Education  
The University of Mississippi

by

ELMIRA RATLIFF

December 2014

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if a relationship existed between the self-efficacy levels of freshman year community college students from critical need areas and their first semester academic achievement during their freshman year. Additionally, this research determined the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy levels and first semester grade point average of students from critical need areas. The study was conducted using three community colleges in the state of Mississippi during the 2013-2014 academic school year. The sample included one hundred and fifty males and one hundred and fifty females with a permanent address and school of graduation from a critical need area in Mississippi. Participants were asked to complete an electronic or paper format of the Self Efficacy Survey by Ralf Schwarzer.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Wayne Ratliff, Sr. and Mattie B. Ratliff (my parents), Darron Rias, Sr. (my oldest brother), and Patricia Stanley (my mentor). Their support, encouragement, tolerance and unwavering faith in me throughout this ten year, educational journey have been crucial to my success.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank GOD for allowing me to accomplish this life-long goal. I understand that none of this would be possible without HIM. This journey has not been easy, but keeping my eyes on the destination has made it more surmountable. I am ever so grateful to those who have contributed to my academic growth and success.

I would like to express sincere thanks to my dissertation chair/advisor, Dr. Rosemary Oliphant-Ingham for expressing a genuine interest in and commitment to my academic success. I appreciate the challenges and encouragement that you provided because they have helped me become a better person. I would also like to express thanks to my other committee members: Dr. Rosusan D. Bartee for giving me a greater appreciation of research and writing; Dr. Jerilou Moore for your close attention to details and formatting (APA) of this document; and Dr. Joel Amidon for giving me direct, continuous feedback on how to make this dissertation my best product.

A special thanks to my spiritual father, Elder Stephen Dennis, and the Love Temple Church of God in Christ family. Thank you for covering me in your prayers, keeping me encouraged and investing in my spiritual and educational endeavors. Because of your prayers, this achievement will be an everlasting reminder of the many things that can be accomplished as a result of faith, perseverance, and humility.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many students from “critical need areas” complete all pre-requisites for graduation (required coursework and standardized tests) and are eager to apply to an institution of higher learning. Despite the students’ level of readiness to pursue a post secondary education, they are accepted into a community college or university. The Mississippi Department of Education (2012), defines critical need areas in Mississippi as school districts with sixty or more teaching positions that have 10 percent of their teaching staff not properly licensed for the subject they are teaching. Institutions of higher learning are recognized and receive additional funding when their enrollment increases, but they often have a difficult time retaining students who are not academically and mentally prepared for college (Vargas, 2004). It is important to address the transitional and retention issues by looking at the self-efficacy, which is one’s belief in his or her capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 1997b), of students in order to increase both student retention and degree completion rates at community colleges and universities in Mississippi. Engle and Tinto (2008) refer to this transition as a “long, indirect and uncertain path to the bachelor’s degree” (p.2). As students travel down the “uncertain path” to a college degree, some of them realize that even though they were admitted into post secondary school, the level of readiness needed to perform effectively on the collegiate level does not exist. Not only does this lack of preparation baffle the student, it equally affects the college instructor and causes him to become more and more perplexed at how these students were even admitted into an institution of higher learning.

An extensive amount of research has been done, nationally, to determine the number of students who annually enroll in post secondary schools “underprepared” to do college level work (Balfanz, 2009; Geiser & Santelices, 2007; Foley-Peres & Poirier, 2009). Geiser & Santelices (2007) found that nearly sixty-five percent of freshmen students at the University of California who were admitted on the basis of their standardized test scores were actually “underprepared” for college. The term underprepared is used to describe undergraduate students who are not able to maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average in order to stay in good standing with the academic and financial aid guidelines for most schools in Mississippi (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). These studies also explain the cause of students being enrolled in college without being academically prepared. Researchers have also compared the impact of looking at high school grade point averages instead of ACT/SAT scores because of an expected significant difference (Geiser & Santelices, 2007; Cohn, Cohn, Balch & Bradley, 2004). According to a study done at the Center for the Study of Community College Student Retention, nearly fifty percent of freshman entering the post secondary level at a community college will not earn a degree (Waller & Tietjen-Smith, 2009; Mohammadi, 1994). The alternatives given by most researchers for this educational problem include testing every student who enrolls in an institution of higher learning and placing the students in courses based on their level, as well as providing more programs that allow students to smoothly transition from high school to college learning (Katsinas & Bush, 2006). According to Tough (2012), there is enough research that deals with the cognitive skills that interfere with student success, so it is time to look at other components that would predict student readiness. Components that cannot be measured by standardized tests or skill acquisitions in completing a task.

In the state of Mississippi, there are a large number of critical need areas or school districts due to the lack of highly qualified teachers who have fulfilled all requirements for teacher licensure in poverty stricken areas. School districts with less than sixty teachers can be labeled as critical need areas if they have fifteen percent of their staff teaching in content areas in which the teachers are not licensed. Another indicator of a critical need school district is one with at least thirty percent of the teaching staff eligible for retirement. Because teachers are the largest in-school factor affecting student achievement, high school teachers have a direct impact on the students' level of readiness for college. Even though this research study will focus on freshman students in Mississippi from critical need areas, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2011) confirmed that there is at least one critical content or geographic area in every state; therefore, this is a national dilemma. Thus, students who graduate from high school in critical need areas enter college with a significant disadvantage in regards to basic knowledge about and access to information about post secondary education, level of family support, and college degree requirements and academic expectations (Vargas, 2004). Secondary and post secondary educators must work together to find out what they can do to level the college readiness "playing field" for students who graduate from critical need areas.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A student from a critical need area in Mississippi or any other state in America is defined as an individual who has grown up in an environment that is less conducive for survival, as well as the opportunity for academic growth beyond the high school level (NCES, 2011). The concepts of student readiness, cognitive predictors, and first generation college students have been thoroughly researched as they relate to academic achievement at a post secondary institution; however, the research has not been applied to critical need areas or non-cognitive

skills such as self-efficacy. In fact, few if any studies have focused on the exploration of perceptions from critical need area students.

Early studies have shown that one's self efficacy beliefs can account for variance in college outcomes (performance and persistence) beyond that which is accounted for by more traditional predictors, such as standardized achievement/aptitude measures (Robbins, Allen, & Casillas, 2006). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy affects one's activities, effort and persistence. As demonstrated in other studies, the relationship between self-efficacy and success can be measured in a variety of ways to predict academic outcomes (Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991).

To accurately predict one's success, measures of self-efficacy must assess college outcomes beyond the traditional predictors, such as standardized tests and grade point averages (GPA). According to Bandura (1986) an individual must experience success in order to maintain or strengthen his or her self-efficacy. The demands placed on students from critical need areas are vast and have significant effects on their capacity to perform similarly with their counterparts. Many critical need area students often do not perceive themselves as being college material. As a result, once they are admitted to community colleges or universities, they have lower first-semester grades, are more likely to drop out of the first semester, and more frequently do not return for their second year (Waller & Tietjen-Smith, 2009; Riehl, 1994).

All of the research studies on the topic of college readiness have one missing piece. The studies provide useful information as it relates to the college data from admission counselors and survey data and explorations from college professors. None of the research examined the academic expectation of the individual student. These studies fail to mention a component that involves the expected capability of the individual students such as self-efficacy to improve

college readiness. Bandura (1997) asserts, “Efficacy beliefs are concerned not only with exercise of control over action but also with the self regulation of thought processes, motivations, and affective and psychological states” (p.36). This establishes a missing component in the literature and suggests the need for further research on the variable of self-efficacy.

Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative study will be to determine if a relationship exists between self-efficacy scores and freshmen first semester grade point averages in community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi. A freshman student’s level of self-efficacy is a significant variable in this study and is defined according to the basic description by Bandura (1997), a renowned expert and historical reference for self-efficacy. In addition to this, if a relationship exists, the researcher will look at the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy levels and freshman year final grade point averages of community college students from critical need areas.

### **Research Question**

With few results after thoroughly searching for empirical studies on the self-efficacy level of community college students from critical need areas as it relates to college readiness, the researcher will seek to ascertain more about the impact of these variables. Therefore, the researcher will seek to determine if a relationship exists between the self-efficacy levels of freshman year community college students from critical need areas and their first semester academic achievement during their freshman year. The following question serves as the overarching research question for this quantitative method study:

- 1). What is the relationship between self-efficacy levels and first semester grade point averages for community college students from critical need areas?



If a relationship exists between self-efficacy levels and first semester grade point averages for the students, the researcher will look at the data to determine the strength of the relationship.

### **Significance of Research Topic**

This study provides significant information for a wide variety of audiences about students from critical need areas, their self-efficacy scores, and their level of readiness for college. Student readiness for college is pertinent to higher education because it determines whether or not institutions of higher learning are closing the achievement gap by leveling the number of students who enter their community college programs of study and the number of students who successfully complete all degree requirements. Community colleges enroll nearly half of the undergraduates in the United States and they play a significant role in the academic and economic future of the nation (Roman, 2007). Because community colleges serve as a major catalyst to prepare students for the workforce, and employers need knowledgeable workers to remain competitive, these institutions are integral to the economic development of their local communities (Roman, 2007; Jenkins, 2002). Although most community colleges have open admissions, they are still losing too many students due to the lack of readiness for college level courses. Until this issue is addressed and instruments for measuring non-cognitive skills, which are those skills such as interpersonal skills, persistence, and self-efficacy that are objectively measured based on personal/situational judgments, associations, and reasoning (Tough, 2012), for freshmen undergraduates are added to the college admissions process, this problem will continue to decrease the accountability of high school teachers and the success rate of graduates from colleges. Because this research study looks closely at how an individual's non-cognitive skills would impact his or her level of readiness for college, this research will be significant in advancing the secondary and post secondary levels of education.

Information about unique factors specific to critical need area students and their level of self-efficacy will be beneficial to anyone who seeks to predict the level of college readiness in students. The level of self-efficacy that graduates from high schools have as they enter college is very important. Research has supported that there are benefits of self-efficacy in the educational area (Balfanz, 2009; Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). In general, people who are more inwardly driven and self-determined to perform a behavior have been found to have more interest, excitement, and confidence which leads to enhancements in persistence and creativity (Balfanz, 2009; Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Bandura, 1997). The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), which was created and updated by Ralf Schwarzar (2009), allows an individual to answer ten questions to determine his or her level of self-efficacy. This instrument has proven to be reliable and valid for quantitative research in the fields of education and psychology, in adolescent and young adults and in giving researchers a general sense of perceived self-efficacy (Schwarzar, 2009). Utilizing this instrument as a component of the enrollment requirements will give college admission committees an idea of a student's non-cognitive skills before the student begins school.

### **Summary of the Introduction**

Chapter One provides an introduction to the research study and provides a statement of the problem as it relates to the field of education, a research question that will aid the researcher in finding solutions to the problem, and an in-depth look at what makes this study significant to secondary and post secondary experts in the field. In addition to this, some terms that will be used throughout this study have been clearly defined. Chapter two will contain a Literature Review of the background research that has been conducted on this topic.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

The Literature Review provides a helpful viewpoint about the previous research (Creswell, 2009) and reasons researchers think freshman students are entering community colleges and universities underprepared. According to Millar and Tanner (2011), the research on community college retention and attrition is very scarce because more emphasis has been placed on four-year colleges and universities. Even though the research has not placed great emphasis on student readiness at the community college, there is a wealth of information available about cognitive methods of determining how prepared freshman community college or university students are as they enroll in post secondary education (Geiser & Santelices, 2007; Cohn et.al., 2004; Katsinas & Bush, 2006). Throughout the last twenty or thirty years, researchers, post secondary educators and college admission counselors have been trying to determine what are the best indicators of academic achievement and long term college success for freshman students entering the post secondary level (Foley-Peres & Poirier, 2009; Marsh, Vandehey & Diekhoff, 2008). Some of these cognitive indicators include high school grade point average, standardized test scores and the amount of self-discipline (Balduf, 2009). Contrary to previous research, current studies have started to look at non-cognitive skills such self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997b).

Some researchers believe freshman year achievement is an individual thing and students must become disciplined young adults to succeed in college (Balfanz, 2009, Byrd & MacDonald,

2009). Other researchers view the high school grade point average to be the best indicator for long-term success in college because it gives college admission committees a good idea of how

well students did in the content areas (Geiser & Santelices, 2007, Cohn et.al, 2004). In addition to high school grade point averages, the standardized test scores on subject area tests and the ACT/SAT gives colleges a good idea of whether or not the student is capable of mastering post secondary level coursework (Katsinas & Bush, 2006). Most recently, researchers have determined that self-efficacy gives students an inward push to be successful (Becker & Gable 2009; Hsieh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Komarraju & Nadler, 2013; DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009). Thus, it is important that some research on community college be explained before factors that influence first semester academic achievement that pertain to high school grade point averages, standardized test scores, self discipline, and self-efficacy can be examined.

### **Community Colleges**

Researchers have been looking at student retention nearly seventy years, but in order to get a true understanding of student retention and academic success at the community college level, one must look at the foundation of this issue and how it has changed over the years (Mohammadi, 1994; Tinto, 1975). According to the retention theorists, student involvement in the academic and social environment is linked to persistence to graduation (Tinto, 1975). Much of the research on student retention in its early stages was based on the conceptual model of retention developed by Vincent Tinto whose work was widely used and well known among researchers in higher education (Mohammadi, 1994). Originally Tinto's model was developed for a longitudinal study of traditional age students at four-year colleges and universities, but has since been adapted for study in two-year, community colleges (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's retention model asserts that freshmen enter college with varied backgrounds and varied goals and commitments (Tinto, 1975). His research confirms the idea that students interact with two systems in the college environment, the academic and the social system (Tinto, 1975). These

systems work together and determine whether or not students who enter the post-secondary level of schooling will persevere and complete college or give up and exit college before attaining their educational goals (Mohammadi, 1994; Tinto, 1975; Millar & Tanner, 2011).

Even though community colleges and universities are both institutions of higher learning, they differ in a number of ways. Research on student retention and attrition at the community college level must be viewed from theoretical lens that entail the retention goal of the institution, the criteria for retention, definitions and the data for progress monitoring (Wild & Ebbers, 2002). Wild and Ebbers (2002) believe that educators, administrations, and researchers at the community college level should “rethink student retention in community colleges when measuring institutional effectiveness with accountability” (p.503). One of the key distinctions of a community college is the many options or career pathways students are afforded such as earning enough credit hours to earn a certificate or completing the coursework to earn an associate of art or science degree. Learners of the twenty-first century need options because not all traditional and non-traditional students have the same idea of success in mind. Some students at the community college level have no intention of graduating with a degree. They simply aspire to attain certification so that they can enter the workforce. Based on their personal beliefs, getting an industry certification that leads to a job would be their definition of being successful or completing college (Wild & Ebbers, 2002).

Wild and Ebbers (2002) place a lot of emphasis on defining student retention at the community college level based on the individual goals that students set for themselves as they enroll in higher education. Unlike the four-year universities who look at students who finish college in four years, the community college system allows students to have options that fit into their lifestyles. “A recommended definition of student retention for community colleges

encompasses several material factors such as initial identification of the student's goal, periodic verification or adjustment of the goal and persistence of the student toward the goal" (Wild & Ebbers, 2002, p.506). The results of their study, after looking at previous research and the enrollment numbers compared to grade point averages, indicate community colleges can improve student retention by developing indicators for all community college students and tracking these indicators to see what percent of students are seeking degrees, how many degree seeking students remain in school after the first semester, and the percent of students graduating or completing within three years of initial enrollment (Wild & Ebbers, 2002). The bottom line is public universities and community colleges that cannot retain students are forced to streamline their budget because they have missed out on potential revenue due to their inability to attract and retain students. Thus, student retention must be addressed through the community college perspective.

Community colleges, like most colleges and universities around the world, have struggled to keep students in school beyond freshman year. Lee Rusty Waller and Tara Tietjen-Smith (2009) conducted a study on community college retention rates segmented by degree of urbanization (classified as city, suburban, town or rural location) and found that the average retention rate for full-time students for all two year, public institutions was 56.36% and the average retention rate for part-time students for all two year, public institutions was 39.30%. The one thing that both the part time and full time students from this study had in common was their admission into these community colleges on good academic standing (Waller & Tietjen-Smith, 2009). Typically, the requirements for admission at community colleges are less rigorous than admission requirements at four-year colleges and universities. Regardless of where the institution is located, post secondary schools should be able to retain more students and ensure

that these students have the resources available to be successful in college. This proves that educators and administrators at the community college level must work hard to determine which student services they need to make available to freshman students.

Likewise, Michael D. Summers (2002), the Vice President for Education and Student Affairs at Greenville Technical College completed an “ERIC Review” to look at all the previous research on the ERIC Database pertaining to attrition at community colleges and discovered that students who enter community colleges have multiple goals other than graduation. He began his study by coming up with a solid definition of “student drop out” at the community college level as “a student who dropped out of school prior to achieving his or her educational goal” (Summers, 2002, p.65). Unlike some research studies in higher education, this study defined several general education terms such as attrition, retention, and enrolled student, so that no four-year institution definitions would be assumed. According to Summers (2002), students take courses to fulfill personal interests, to complete job training and to meet transfer requirements for a four-year college or university. He argued that community college students do not always have a focus or purpose of receiving a degree.

As evident in other research articles on student retention and freshman academic achievement, this analysis of research from the ERIC Database showed that the community college needs a stronger emphasis on increasing student retention and decreasing student attrition. Another trend noticed in the previous research on community colleges was the environmental and psychological influences on freshman academic achievement. Environmental influences consist of the neighborhood and surrounding in which students grow up in and attend college, and psychological influences consist of the mindset and values instilled in students as they reach adulthood (Summers, 2002). Even though most of the early research did not include



environmental and psychological influences, these two factors could determine whether or not students at community colleges are successful during their first semester of post-secondary education.

Despite the fact that no previous research has looked at the relationship of self-efficacy and community college students, Brad and David (2011) conducted a study to determine the potential of cognitive dissonance, a factor that may help explain why students drop out of community colleges in such large numbers. They examined the drop out rates at the community college level through the lens of the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, which says that when a deeply held personal belief is contradicted the individual is left to deal with dissonance or conflict (Millar and Tanner, 2011). This means a student's perception about himself or herself is damaged or changed when he or she fails at completing a specific task. Seven hundred and fifty-nine first time freshmen were given a sixty-item survey using a Likert Scale format. The instrument used was the Academic Readiness Survey instrument that was given to participants before and after their freshman year. Results from this study showed that the students' perceptions about their readiness changed very little from their time of enrollment to the end of their first semester (Millar and Tanner, 2011). These results further support the idea that freshmen academic achievement has a lot to do with how well students perceive themselves.

### **Factors that Influence First Semester Academic Achievement in Post-Secondary Schools**

#### **High School Grade Point Averages.**

Two researchers, Said Geiser and Maria Veronica Santelices (2007), surveyed many leaders at colleges and universities around the world and explored the question of why several high school graduates receive full admission, but are not academically prepared for freshman level coursework. Their study examines the high school grade point average in college

preparatory classes as the best indication of student readiness for post secondary level coursework (Geiser & Santelices, 2007).

The research for this study consisted of 79,785 first- time freshmen who entered the University of California over the four- year period (Geiser & Santelices, 2007). The data sample used was drawn from the freshman student database, which tracks students throughout their years of enrollment at the University of California campuses and the main variables considered were high school grade point averages and standardized test scores (Geiser & Santelices, 2007). . Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the questions on the survey. Statistical analyses of ANOVAs and T-tests were conducted between conceptually related questions and effect sizes. There were no open ended questions to place in themes and other conceptual perspectives (Geiser & Santelices, 2007).

Geiser and Veronica Santelices (2007) de-emphasize the use of standardized tests for college admission and argue that a greater emphasis should be placed on the student's high school record, which includes averages in all subject areas. The authors' conclusion of this study showed that the four year high school cumulative GPAs are the best long-term indicators of success. According to Geiser and Santelices (2007), long-term indicators of success (characteristics that help admission counselors predict the academic success of a student) are components or characteristics of a student's background that helps admission counselors predict his or her expected level of academic completion. The high school grade point average is one example of a long-term indicator of success.

Another study further acknowledges that college admission guidelines are placing emphasis on the right criteria for enrollment (Cohn, Balch & Bradley, 2004). The authors

realized the inclusion of the SAT requirement was important because it increases the probability of success in college, but the high school grade point averages are equally essential (Cohn et.al, 2004). The study's primary focus was to assess the degree to which SAT scores, high school grade point average (HSGPA) and class rank predict success in college (Cohn et.al, 2004). The research was done at the University of South Carolina with 521 out of 731 students who were enrolled in several sections of an undergraduate first semester principles of economics course. The data instruments consisted of an informed-consent form, student questionnaires, and course-related tests and quizzes.

The data from their research portrayed high school grade point averages as being a great mirror of college grade point averages. The authors realized the inclusion of the SAT requirement was important because it increases the probability of success in college. Also, this study revealed that high school percentile ranks (derived from grade point averages) of 3.0 or above would produce higher college grade point averages (Cohn et.al, 2004). This would allow college admission counselors to consider a student's high school rank as he or she is enrolled in college. Even though a high school grade point average is a good indicator of what type of grades students made in high school, it does not provide post secondary schools with any information about how students achieved compared to their fellow classmates.

### **Standardized & Placement Test Scores.**

High school and college administrators have not been assessing what matters most because college readiness has not improved (Katsinas & Bush, 2006). Stephen G. Katsinas and V. Barbara Bush (2006) believed standardized tests were tied to the success of students as they enter college. The high stakes testing movement in America has emerged and negatively impacted high school completion rates and level of preparedness for students who enter

freshman level college courses. Therefore, their study's aim was to determine the most important component high schools should be assessing in students (Katsinas & Bush, 2006).

This mixed study, Katsina & Bush (2006) took place in urban, suburban and rural school districts with African American students with a sample of all high school students who took standardized tests. Quantitative data was also taken from the college campuses these students entered and the prisons in which some of the underachievers were placed. Entry into college was listed as a positive outcome, although students enter the institutions unprepared for the coursework and eventually flunk out or drop out. T-tests were used to find the results for this study (Katsinas & Bush, 2006). Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the questions on the survey. Statistical analyses of ANOVAs and T-tests were conducted between conceptually related questions and effect sizes. There were also open-ended interview questions to place in themes and other conceptual perspectives. Katsinas and Bush's findings revealed that there is a strong relationship between a strong high school curriculum and proficient performing on standardized tests (Katsinas & Bush, 2006).

Furthermore, two other researchers Kathleen Foley-Peres and Dawn Poirier (2008) expanded the research on the impact of standardized and placement test scores. Because many colleges and universities use SAT math scores or math placement tests to place students in math courses, the authors conducted a study to compare the use of these two methods of assessment (Foley-Peres & Poirier, 2008). Foley-Peres and Poirier (2008) examined a reasonable sample size to find out whether the SAT scores or the college math placement scores are the best indicators of college readiness. The issue, however, is that some students have SAT scores that are indicative of their level of readiness for college and others have scores that are not a good indicator of their level of readiness for college coursework (Foley-Peres & Poirier, 2008). On

the other hand, other students have taken college math placement tests that show their level of readiness, but these placements are not always accurate.

The sample size at a Private College in New England consisted of 188 freshman students' SAT scores, college math assessment scores, midterm grades and college faculty assessments (Foley-Peres & Poirier, 2008). All of the freshmen participants were asked to take the test on the internet. Basic math skills, algebra skills and calculus skills were components of the test. Each student who did not complete the math assessment prior to the start date for school was given the opportunity to complete the assessment at the school in a classroom. All participants were given a specified time and a non-scientific calculator. Faculty members of the students completed questionnaires, but were not informed of the study in order to avoid testing bias (Foley-Peres & Poirier, 2008). Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the questions on the survey. Statistical analyses of ANOVAs and T-tests were conducted between conceptually related questions and effect sizes. There were no open-ended questions to place in themes and other conceptual perspectives. The authors' conclusion was that the SAT scores were not the best indicators of the math level course the students should select, and that the college math assessment scores may have been better indicators according to initial midterm grades (Foley-Peres & Poirier, 2008).

A group of researchers from Pennsylvania State University examined the use of an introductory General Psychology course for freshman students to predict their future success, rather than utilizing the SAT/ACT scores (Marsh, Vandehey & Diekhoff, 2008).

Two hundred and fifty seven students with variables of age, gender, classification, ACT score, SAT score, general psychology exams, and cumulative grade point averages made up the sample

(Marsh, Vandehey & Diekhoff, 2008). Five instructors taught the course in a total of eleven classes over a period of two semesters. The students received the same notes, visual aids, in-class exercises, and exams. Each of the five exams consisted of fifty multiple-choice questions (Marsh, Vandehey & Diekhoff, 2008).

The results of this study showed the ACT had a significant positive correlation to GPA, predicting eighteen percent of the variance in GPA. Secondly, including General Psychology Exams provided a significant improvement in predicted variance to thirty-three percent (Marsh, Vandehey & Diekhoff, 2008). Another result indicated that the combination of ACT scores with the sum of the course exam brought an additional significant increase in explained variance to forty percent (Marsh, Vandehey & Diekhoff, 2008). Thus, the inclusion of scores on exams in the General Psychology course are better indicators of subsequent academic success than are scores on the ACT or SAT tests.

### **Self Discipline.**

One researcher, Robert Balfanz (2009) understood the need for all American high schools to ensure that all students graduate from twelfth grade prepared for post secondary schooling. Underachievement has been a substantial problem in the field of education for quite some time, but very few researchers seek to define what the term “underachieve” means. The term underachieve means to academically perform at a level below the standard 2.5 grade point average to keep good standing, academically and financially at a college or university (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

The subjects of this study were first year freshmen at Queen Mary College, specifically those who were on academic probation or who had earned an academic warning (Balfanz, 2009).

An academic warning was given to those students who make less than a 2.5 semester grade point average and academic probation consists of students who score less than a 2.5 semester grade point average and earn fewer than nine credit hours. The total freshmen population was 1, 500, but the sample involved eighty-three students from the college's database on academic warning or probation. Participants were interviewed and given a certificate to a local restaurant upon completion of this process. All interviews were conducted online via AOL's Instant Messenger with transcripts from interview question answers saved in a Microsoft Word document (Balfanz, 2009).

The data was analyzed using qualitative data analyses approaches using themes (Balfanz, 2009). After conducting his research he found that the three major themes analyzed as reasons for underachievement include a lack of preparation for the college, problems with time management, and issues with self-discipline and motivation (Balfanz, 2009). These are all things that keep students from earning satisfactory grade point averages while they are in college.

In addition to the previous studies, another study explored the nature of college readiness from the perspectives of first-generation college students (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). The participants of this study had transferred to a university from a community college and were of the first generation in their families to attend college (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). The overall purpose of doing this study was to identify factors that lead to students being under prepared for college.

The participants of this study had transferred to a university from a community college, were older than twenty-five, and were of the first generation in their families to attend college (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Methods for the study included an in-depth phenomenological

interview. Specifically, interview protocols were established in the interview process. Each participant volunteered from an upper division, undergraduate liberal arts program of a small urban university located in the Pacific Northwest. These participants had earned an Associate of Arts degree from a community college, were older than twenty-five and were first generation college students (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Thirty to sixty minute interviews included background information and experiences as college students. In addition to this, they were asked to clarify questions and answer a reflexive journal entry (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005).

The findings revealed ten themes and were organized in categories such as skills and abilities perceived as important for college readiness, background factors and life experiences that contribute to college readiness and nontraditional student self concept (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Findings also indicated that first-generation students' life experiences contributed to the development of skills perceived as critical to success in college. While academic skills are clearly important, time management, goal focus, self-discipline and self-advocacy emerged as more important through stories, experiences, and reflections. In order for students to enroll in college and successfully master the course work, the students must have a certain degree of self-discipline (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005).

Not only have researchers written articles to demonstrate the connection between self-discipline and academic achievement, but Paul Tough (2012), who is an editor for the New York Times and Harper Magazine has written a book and done extensive research in the field of education as it relates to parenting, poverty, politics and the achievement gap. Tough's book further validates the idea that more research should be done on non-cognitive skills to determine how children really succeed in both secondary and post secondary levels of education. Tough (2012) took a historical look at the research available on student success and drew the conclusion



that non-cognitive qualities that define character provide a better outlook on the academic success of students. He believes there is enough research that deals with the cognitive skills that interfere with student success. Tough (2012) thinks it is time to look at components that cannot be measured by standardized test or skill acquisition in completing a task. Early studies have shown that one's self efficacy beliefs can account for variance in college outcomes (performance and persistence) beyond that which is accounted for by more traditional predictors, such as standardized achievement/aptitude measures (Tough, 2012). Unlike most of the research available on these topics, Paul Tough deals with the non-cognitive skills that interfere with student success.

Tough (2012) believes that high schools and colleges must use the previous research to allow them to make meaningful decisions that will positively influence the students who are being educated in America. Tough believes it takes more than parenting with good childhood experiences and nurturing environments. Character building in adolescents can also positively impact a student's academic achievement (Tough, 2012). Elementary, middle school and high school teachers can fill empty places that parents and/or guardians never had the opportunity to fill by reaching out to students who grow up in disadvantaged areas, rather than kicking them out of school or expecting them to act like children from affluent areas act. The key characteristics that Tough points out include: perseverance, curiosity, conscientiousness, optimism, and self-discipline (Tough, 2012).

### **Self-Efficacy.**

One of the most widely known researchers of self-efficacy, Albert Bandura (1997b) wrote a book entitled *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* that emphasizes the many aspects of self-efficacy. As defined in the book, self-efficacy refers to the belief or confidence an

individual has about his or her ability to complete a task. According to Bandura (1997b), individuals who have no confidence in their capability to successfully complete a task have not tapped into the realm of exercising their control of self-efficacy. Unlike several other traits that are categorized as non-cognitive, self-efficacy is completely unique and individual to each person (Bandura, 1997b). The book presents the idea of looking at self-efficacy through theoretical discussions and developmental analysis. Bandura sets up the opening chapters of his book by laying out the self-efficacy theory and showing how this theory was derived from the Social Learning Theory or the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997b).

According to Bandura (1997b), self-efficacy beliefs are an important part of human motivation and behavior as well as influencing the actions that can affect one's life. He explains that self-efficacy "refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p.2). Bandura goes on to show how self-efficacy is measured along three basic scales- magnitude, strength and generality. Self-efficacy magnitude measures the difficulty level an individual feels is required to perform a certain task. Self-efficacy strength refers to the amount of conviction an individual has about performing successfully at diverse levels of difficulty. Generality of self-efficacy refers to the "degree to which the expectation is generalized across situations" (p.2). Furthermore, Bandura's main purpose of writing this book was to show that performance and motivation are in part determined by how effective people believe they can be in life (1997b).

In addition to this, Stephen P. Becker and Robert K. Gable (2009) conducted a study to find out how much of an impact self-efficacy really had on academic achievement at the post-secondary level. Because most public universities and community colleges in the United States have open admission, counselors and recruiter have a quota to reach each year for enrollment,

they sometimes allow students to begin school under provisional purposes (Becker & Gable, 2009). The purpose of their study was to examine the relationship between self-efficacy or belief in one's capability (Bandura, 1997) and first term grade point averages, attendance, and retention using a modified version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, 2005).

Their (Becker & Gable) mixed method study took place in an urban career college with 194 first-term day and evening students (sixty six males and one hundred and twenty-eight females). Students who attended the first term class during the first week of the term were given a complete explanation of the study including its purpose, procedures, use of results and confidentiality. Participants' first term grade point averages and attendance records were taken from the college admission database. Statistical methods used in this study included a factor analysis, multiple regressions, and Pearson's product-moment correlations (Becker & Gable, 2009).

Becker and Gable found that general and specific self-efficacy were equally related to first term academic success. While the amount of variation explained was small, it can be described as a "small to medium" effect size (Becker & Gable, 2009). This showed that significant relationships exist between grade point averages, attendance and retention correlations (Becker & Gable, 2009).

Another study by Peggy Hsieh, Jeremy Sullivan and Norma Guerra (2007) sought to explore the reason undergraduate enrollment is constantly increasing, but the numbers are low for students who are actually retained after their freshman year. The purpose of their study was to address concerns raised by college educators by examining differences between students in good academic standing and those who are on academic probation. Specifically, differences in

students' self-efficacy beliefs and goals toward learning are examined (Heish, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007). They utilized the Academic Goal Orientation Inventory and the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey as well as student grade point averages to categorize students in an academically unsuccessful (students with grade point averages less than 2.5) or academically successful (students with grade point averages more than 2.5) group (Heish, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007).

This quantitative study took place at a large metropolitan, Hispanic-serving institution in the Southwest with one hundred and twelve undergraduate students. Sixty percent of the students were on academic probation with grade point averages less than a 2.0 and fifty-two students were in good standing with a grade point average of 2.0 or higher. Students completed two sets of questionnaire with six items measuring students' perceived academic efficacy adapted from the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey and eighteen items from the Achievement Goal Orientation Inventory. Students were asked to rate whether they agree or disagree with the statements using a five point Likert Scale. Students were categorized into either the academically successful group or the academically unsuccessful group based on their grade point average (Heish, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007).

Their results showed that there is no significant relationship between GPA and performance-approach goals, which are short-term goals based on performing a given task, but self-efficacy was significantly related to student GPAs (Heish, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007). The findings for the second part of the research question showed that students' self-efficacy judgments were significantly higher for those students who were in good academic standing.

Meera Kamarraju and Dustin Nadler (2013) conducted a study that took a closer look at self-efficacy and academic achievement. They focused on the implicit beliefs, goals and effort regulation of five hundred students. The purpose of their study was to determine the relationship and impact of an individual's beliefs, goals and efforts as they all relate to self-efficacy and academic achievement (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013).

Komarraju and Nadler (2013) completed this study at a large institution of higher learning in the United States and the sample included four hundred and seven undergraduate students from multiple age groups and racial/ethnic make ups. All students who participated in this study were asked to complete a Motivated Strategies Learning Questionnaire, Implicit Theories of Intelligence Scale, and Achievement Goal Inventory with a self-reported grade point average slot. Statistical tests were a MANCOVA and a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Variance was also determined when the researchers looked at the grade point averages (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013).

The findings for this study (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013) showed that low self-efficacy students tended to believe intelligence is innate and unchangeable and high self-efficacy students pursued mastery goals involving challenge and gaining new knowledge as well as performance goals involving good grades and outperforming others. Findings also indicated that self-efficacy, effort regulation and help seeking predicted eighteen percent of the variance in grade point average (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013). Effort regulation did not completely mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and grade point average. Furthermore, self-efficacious students were able to achieve, academically, because they monitor and self regulate their impulses and persist in the face of difficulties (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013).

Another study was conducted in 2009 by Joseph DeWitz, Lynn Woolsey and Bruce Walsh and it involved self-efficacy, college student retention and an individual's purpose in life. Unlike many of the studies completed with both cognitive and non-cognitive components, this study emphasized the student's purpose in life. The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between self-efficacy beliefs and purpose in life among college students (DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009).

DeWitz, Woolsey and Walsh used a sample size of three hundred and forty-four undergraduate students from John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. There were two hundred and thirty-three females, but only one hundred and eleven males with a very diverse racial and ethnic makeup (DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009). Each of the participants completed the following: the Purpose in Life Test: Part A, the College Self Efficacy Inventory, the Scale of Perceived Social Efficacy, the General Self Efficacy Scale, and the Marlowe Crown Social Desirability Scale. Even though the students had several surveys to complete, they were given ample time by the researchers. Statistical methods included the calculation of Means, Standard Deviations, and a Regression Analysis (DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009).

The authors hypothesized that there would be an association between Frankl's Construct of Purpose in Life with Bandura's Theory of Self Efficacy. At the end of the study, results showed that all variables of self-efficacy were significantly and positively correlated with purpose in life. Findings also revealed that general self-efficacy was the most significant predictor of purpose in life scores (DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009).

## **Summary of the Literature Review**

Based on the current status of decreasing post secondary education retention rates and increased community college enrollments, all of the research studies on the topic of college readiness have one missing piece. The studies provide useful information as it relates to the college data from admission counselors and survey data and explorations from college professors. These studies fail to mention a component that involves the expected capability of the individual students such as self-efficacy to better predict first semester academic achievement in community colleges and universities. Bandura (1997) asserts, “Efficacy beliefs are concerned not only with exercise of control over action but also with the self-regulation of thought processes, motivations, and affective and psychological states” (p.36). This establishes a missing component in the literature and suggests the need for further research on the variable of self-efficacy. Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative study will be to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and first semester academic achievement in college students. An undergraduate student’s level of self-efficacy is a significant variable in this study and is defined according to the basic description by Bandura, a renowned expert and historical reference for self- efficacy.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

This study further examined the relationship between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages for students from critical need areas in Mississippi through a relational study. The following chapter outlines the study design. Information is provided about the design, population, sample, and the study subjects. A detailed description of the instruments and the statistical tests used to analyze the data are provided.

#### **Design**

The proposed quantitative study examined the relationship between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages for students from critical need areas in Mississippi. This study utilized quantitative methods to survey participants to establish whether self-efficacy levels have an impact on the grade point average of first semester community college students from critical need areas. Additionally, this research determined the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy levels and first semester grade point average of students from critical need areas. This study sought to advance the research in self-efficacy theory and increase the knowledge of counselors, secondary and post-secondary educators, and administrators.

#### **Population, Sample, and Participants**

The target population for this study consisted of freshman students at all branches of three community colleges in the state of Mississippi during the 2013-2014 school year. The community colleges that were used for this study were College A, College B, and College C. The participants were freshmen from critical needs areas who have completed their first semester of college. Because a vast majority of the students in most critical need areas are African



American, the subjects were not ethnically diverse. The sample contained students with a permanent address and school of graduation from any critical need area in Mississippi. The researcher sought to get as many students involved in this study as possible, but the minimum number of participants was one hundred and fifty males and one hundred and fifty females. This number was selected so that the results and data received from this study would be generalizable for males and females in the critical need areas in the state of Mississippi.

### **Instrument**

The General Self-Efficacy Scale was the instrument used to determine the self-efficacy level of each student and to see if a relationship existed between the levels of self-efficacy of the students from critical need areas and their first semester grade point average. The General Self-Efficacy Scale was developed in 1979 and revised in 1995 by Ralf Schwarzer and Matthias Jerusalem. This instrument was developed to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy with the aim in mind to predict coping with daily hassles as well as adaptation after experiencing all kinds of stressful life events (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The General Self-Efficacy Scale has been used internationally for the past two decades by researchers in the fields of Education and Psychology. According to Schwarzer (1995), the scale has worked well for universities such as Berlin, Washington, Duke, Connecticut, Russia, Japan and Germany. All of the studies researched contained an intended purpose of tracking generalized self-efficacy. Unlike other more specific self-efficacy instruments such as the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, the General Self-Efficacy Scale was multi-dimensional and more generalizable.

According to researchers who have tested the validity and reliability of the General Self-Efficacy Scale, the instrument was designed for the general population with the inclusion of adolescents. There were ten questions on the scale and it takes an individual about four minutes

to complete it. This instrument provided students an opportunity to choose answers from a Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree and strongly agree. Each instrument had a sum score that ranged from ten to forty. Using samples from twenty-three nations, Cronbach's alphas ranged from .76 to .90 with the majority being in the high .80s, which meant the validity and reliability were very high. Criterion related validity has been documented in numerous correlation studies where positive coefficients were found to be favorable. Above all, this instrument has been successfully used internationally for over two decades and is suitable for a broad range of applications. Although the General Self-Efficacy Scale has been used in studies that relate to self-efficacy and student readiness, it has not been used alone for any studies regarding first semester grade point averages or critical need areas. Most studies that relate to student readiness for college and self-efficacy have chosen more specific instruments such as the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale.

### **Procedure**

The researcher sought permission from the University of Mississippi Institutional Review Board (IRB) before completing any of the procedures for this study. Permission was granted from the Mississippi Community College Board to ensure that the presidents at each of the chosen community colleges had no objection to this research study. The researcher conducted the study in the middle of the participants' second semester in the community college, which was during the months of March, April and May. Data was gathered until there was a substantial amount of data beyond the minimum sample size collected at each of the three community colleges through the use of follow-up emails and reminder face-to-face visits at each of campuses. (The researcher reminded participants to check their email and respond to his or her

participation in the study.) To ensure that all information was secure and confidential, no other individuals had access to the participants' data other than the researcher.

The researcher emailed each student on the campus who graduated from a critical need area a link that consisted of an introductory consent form to obtain his or her permission to participate in this research study. The consent form allowed the participants to read over their rights and responsibilities and agree to participate in this research study. This information also enlightened participants that they may choose to drop out of the sample at any time. If students checked the "yes" box to give their consent to participate in the survey, they were directed to the survey, which had eight demographic questions at the beginning of the survey. If students checked the "no" box, there was a page thanking the student for taking the time to read about this research study. The link, consent form and survey were administered using the Qualtrics software, which allowed the researcher to generate a number of reports including the responses from raw data, percentages and basic statistics. Each participant was asked to complete a demographic questionnaire answering questions about their age, gender, ethnicity, hometown, school district, academic record, and first semester grade point average. These forms were available to the participant in electronic form unless a participant requested a paper copy.

The study required electronically administering the surveys over a period of up to three months consecutively. Afterwards, the students' first semester final grades were confirmed from the university's registrar's office or the online student records database to obtain accuracy. Then, the students' grade point averages and self-efficacy scale scores were analyzed to determine which students had high self-efficacy levels and high grade point averages and which students had low self-efficacy levels and low grade point averages. After looking at this data, the

researcher calculated the mean scores and stand deviation of scores before running the Pearsons r Correlation test through the use of SPSS.

## **Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis was as follows: There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy levels and grade point averages for community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi during their first semester of college. Using an alpha level of .05, the researcher used the formula  $n - 2$  (number of subjects)-2 to calculate the degrees of freedom. After getting the degrees of freedom, the r table gave the researcher a critical value to use in accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis. If r is greater than the critical value from the r table, the researcher will reject the null hypothesis. If r is less than the critical value from the r table, the researcher will accept the null hypothesis. Because the hypothesis was rejected, there was a significant relationship between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages for community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi.

## **Statistical Tests and Data Analysis**

The independent variable in this study was self-efficacy levels and the dependent variable was grade point average. Both of these variables contained continuous data such as self-efficacy levels and grade point averages. Before looking at the statistical tests, the researcher looked at the mean to determine the center of the self-efficacy scores and the center of the grade point averages. Also, standard deviations were calculated to show the measure of variability in averages.

To determine the statistical relationship between a student's self-efficacy level and his or her first semester grade point average, the collected data was entered into the Statistical Package

for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and analyzed using a Pearson's  $r$ . The Pearson's  $r$  was used to determine whether or not the two variables were related. This test was used because the  $r$  statistic has a range of values from -1.00 (a perfect negative correlation) to 1.00 (a perfect positive correlation) (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006). A negative correlation means that as one variable increased in size, the other decreased. A positive correlation means that as one variable increased so does the other.

Pearson's  $r$  is always a number that ranges from -1.00 to +1.00. A negative value of  $r$  indicates a negative relationship and a positive value of  $r$  indicates a positive relationship. A value of zero indicates no relationship, and as  $r$  moves away from zero in either direction it indicates a stronger relationship. When it reaches either -1.00 or +1.00, it indicates a relationship that is as strong as an  $r$  relationship can be. Correlations of -1.00 and +1.00 are also called perfect negative and perfect positive relationships (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006). The strength of an  $r$  relationship is indicated by how far  $r$  is above or below zero. So, for example,  $r$  values of -.70 and +.70 represent equally strong relationships. The difference is only that one is a negative relationship and the other is a positive relationship. According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2006),  $r = .10$  can be considered a small effect,  $r = .30$  can be considered a medium effect, and  $r = .50$  can be considered a large effect.

Furthermore, the researcher will reject the null hypothesis if the sample  $r$  value is greater than the critical  $r$  value. This means that the probability of getting an  $r$  value, greater than the critical  $r$  value is less than five percent (or whatever  $\alpha$  is). At this point, the researcher can decide that the null hypothesis is not true. The researcher will fail to reject the null hypothesis if the sample  $r$  value is less than the critical  $t$  value. This means that the probability of getting a

lesser r value, if the null hypothesis was true, is greater than five percent. Consequently, the null hypothesis would be true (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006).

## **Conclusion**

The introduction and literature review introduced the topic and explained the study. The method section explained in details the process involved with conducting this particular study. The study that the researcher will be engaged in will focus on freshmen level students from critical need areas at Mississippi community colleges. These students were surveyed and their final semester grades were analyzed to determine if there is a relationship between the level of self-efficacy in freshman students from critical need areas and their first semester grade point average. The methods section introduced the instrument used in collecting data and discussed how the data was analyzed. This section provided specific information that will be used by the researcher, participants, and the gatekeepers to ensure that the study is safe, beneficial and successful (Patton, 2002).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages for community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi. Self-efficacy scores, the dependent variable, were determined through the use of Ralf Schwarzer's Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, 2005). Freshmen first semester grade point averages, the dependent variable, were derived from an electronic database used by the registrar's office at each of the community colleges used in the study. This chapter includes a description of the process utilized for getting freshman students to complete an electronic and/or paper self-efficacy survey, as well as, answer two other questions that would help the researcher link the student's self-efficacy score back to his or her grade point average. These questions included the race/ethnicity of each student and his or her student identification number. Next, some of this information was exported electronically from Qualtrics and some were manually entered into an Excel spreadsheet. The numbers in the Excel spreadsheet with all survey responses were checked multiple times by the researcher to ensure accuracy of all information to prevent outliers before running the statistical tests in SPSS (Fields, 2013).

First, the sampling and procedures and demographic information was reported, followed by the information about the outliers (univariate and multivariate) and normality. Then, descriptives were presented to show the mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and variance of gender, self-efficacy score and grade point average. Finally, the correlation between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages of students from critical need areas in

Mississippi were examined to see if these two variables had a relationship. In addition to this, the Pearson's  $r$  correlation gave the researcher the actual strength of the relationship. The data and the results for the hypothesis have been presented and summarized in this section.

### **Sampling and Procedures**

As addressed in the Introduction and Methodology sections of this research, this study was quantitative in structure, but descriptive statistics were examined in order to gain meaningful insight about the high school grade point average and/or academic success of each participant. Specifically, each participant's high school transcript data (grade point average and name of high school) allowed for the validation of gender and critical need area in Mississippi.

The sample was drawn from a pool of 1200 students enrolled as freshman from critical need areas in the state of Mississippi. College A pulled from a list of 500 students from a critical need area, College B pulled from a list of 300 students from a critical need area, and College C pulled from a list of 400 students from a critical need area. The researcher targeted 150 male students and 150 female students, which would give a total of 300 participants for this study. The Director of Institutional Research pulled the data (grade point average, gender, student identification number, high school name, date of birth, and email address) for all students who participated in this study and sent it to the researcher in an excel file. The researcher combined the information from each college into one spreadsheet because this study did not require a breakdown by college. The files were then checked to ensure that the student identification numbers matched the surveys submitted by the students and that the data exported from Qualtrics was accurate and free of errors. All of this information was carefully imported to SPSS and the gender for each participant was labeled 1 for female and 2 for male.



## Demographic Data

The study contained 300 participants who completed the self-efficacy survey. The sample was made up of traditional students, age 18-23. According to statistical data from the 2013 audit completed by the Division of Research and Effectiveness at the Mississippi Community College Board, 77.2% of the students from College A are between the age 18-23, 76.1% of the students from College B are between age 18-23, and 71.8% of the students from College C are between age 18-23 (Fletes, 2013). The demographics from each of the community colleges show that traditional age students dominate the campuses. This study consisted of 150 (50%) males and 150 (50%) females. The participant gender and ethnic make-up of those who participated in this study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

### *Participant Gender and Ethnicity*

	Number (n=300)	Percent
Male Students	150	50
Female Students	150	50
African American	183	61
Caucasian	90	30
Asian/Hispanic	24	8
Other	3	1

The sample (n=300) of this study was slightly different from the gender makeup at each of the colleges' general population. This explains why it was a little more difficult to get 150 surveys completed by the males than by the females. According to statistical data from the Mississippi Community College Board, the average female population at each of the colleges is 65% and the average male population is 35% (Fletes, 2013). The ethnicity of the sample was similar to that of the average college population for each of the community colleges in the study because the community college population was 56% African American, 35% Caucasian, 6% Asian or Hispanic and 3% were listed as "other" (Fletes, 2013). From the sample, 61% (183) of the students were African American, 30% (90) of the students were Caucasian, 8% (24) of the students were Asian or Hispanic and 1% (3) of the students were from an "other" ethnicity. Based on these findings, the sample closely approximated the demographic makeup of the general community college population for the colleges selected for this study. Table 1 illustrates the gender and ethnic makeup of the students who participated in this study.

### **Outliers and Normality**

To further examine this study, the researcher explored the data in SPSS. Each variable was screened for missing data, normality and univariate and multivariate outliers for self-efficacy scores and grade point averages. The relationships between variables were also explored and the scales were tested for reliability within both groups. The data was screened for missing values using the FREQUENCIES option in SPSS. Group means were calculated for self-efficacy score and grade point average based on the available data. It was determined that there were no outliers (univariate and multivariate) for grade point averages or self-efficacy score. According to Fields (2013), an outlier is an observation point that is distant from other observations. It may be due to variability in the measurement or it may show experimental error.

Univariate outliers were checked through box plots and stem and leaf diagrams generated using the EXPLORE option in SPSS. Multivariate outliers were identified using Mahalanobis Distance with  $p < .001$ . Because the data for multivariate outliers did not produce an output page, the researcher computed the Mahalanobis Distance  $D^2$  values for each self-efficacy score and grade point average. The Mahalanobis distance accounts for the variance of each variable and the covariance between variables. It does this by transforming the data into standardized uncorrelated data and computing the ordinary Euclidean distance for the transformed data (Fields, 2013). None of the variables listed in the data chart on the statistic and standard error columns contain values (probabilities) that were below .001. This indicates that there were no outliers. The outlier data chart can be viewed in Appendix D.

Then, the data was screened with “Tests of Normality” using the EXPLORE option in SPSS. The variables were screened for the self-efficacy scores and the grade point average using measures of skewness, kurtosis, histograms, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic to compare a sample with a reference probability distribution and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic to determine if the sample came from a normally distributed population (Fields, 2013). Table 2 shows the statistic, degree of freedom and the significance of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and the Shapiro-Wilk used for the tests of normality.

Table 2

*Tests of Normality*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
SE_Score	.170	300	.000	.908	300	.000

GPA	.101	300	.000	.971	300	.000
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a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The Tests of Normality table above indicates that both the self-efficacy (SE) score and grade point average (GPA) distribution are significantly different from a normal distribution.

However, with large sets of data, these values can turn out significant even though the data may not differ critically from a normal distribution. The Probability Plot (PP Plot), Quantile Quantile Plot (QQ Plot) & the Histograms do not show a large deviation from the normal distribution.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test showed the SE scores,  $D(300) = .170$ ,  $p = .000$  were significantly non-normal. Likewise, the GPA,  $D(300) = .101$ ,  $p = .000$  was similar. According to Fields (2013), the basic reporting format for the K-S test is  $D(df) = \text{statistic, sig. value}$ .

Skewedness and kurtosis were not extreme. The histograms of the variables similarly indicated normal distributions for both variables. These statistics were significant for the variables for self-efficacy scores and grade point average reflecting normal distributions. The statistics demonstrated that none of the variables were sufficiently non-normal to compromise the subsequent analysis. The Histograms and QQ Plots for the self-efficacy scores and grade point average can be found in Appendix E and Appendix F.

**Findings**

The purpose of this quantitative correlation study was to examine the relationship between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages for community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi. In preparation for data analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS. Data was reviewed for missing values prior to the analysis, and any participant records missing information was excluded from the study. The

results from the descriptive analysis (mean, standard deviation, frequencies, variance, range, etc.) are presented below.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

The research question sought to examine the relationship between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages for students from critical need areas in Mississippi. Using descriptive statistics, two factors were analyzed that included (a) self-efficacy score and (b) grade point average. Based on the Likert Scale by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995), self-efficacy scores were ranked or categorized as the following: 10-23=low self-efficacy; 24-27=below average self-efficacy; 28-31= average self-efficacy; 32-34=above average self-efficacy; and 35-40=high self-efficacy. When looking at the 4.0 grading scale a 0-2.4 constitutes below average, a 2.5-2.9 constitutes average, and a 3.0-4.0 constitutes above average.

As illustrated in Table 3, self-efficacy scores ranged from ten to thirty-nine. The minimum self-efficacy score was ten and the maximum score was thirty-nine. The mean self-efficacy score for all participants in this study was 25.9467 with a standard deviation of 7.71897. This means that the average self-efficacy score (25.9467) for the freshmen at the three community colleges used for this study would be in the below average category. Twenty-three students had self-efficacy scores that were between twenty-five and twenty-six. Two of the twenty-three students had a grade point average higher than 2.8. The remaining twenty-one students had grade point averages of 2.2 through 2.8. Only one percent (three students) of the sample had a maximum self-efficacy score of thirty-nine, which would be considered a high self-efficacy. Of those three students, two of them had grade point averages of 4.0 and the other student had a 3.67 grade point average. On the other hand, fifteen or five percent of the students

in the sample had the minimum self-efficacy score of ten. Eleven out of the fifteen students had grade point averages ranging from .5 to 1.8, which is below average. Table 4 defines the categories of descriptive data and shows the numerical value of each category.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for SE Score and Grade Point Average*

	SE Score	GPA
N	300	300
Range	29.00	2.93
Minimum	10.00	1.07
Maximum	39.00	4.00
Mean (Statistic)	25.9467	2.7816
Mean (Standard Error)	.44565	.03884
Mode	31	3 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation	7.71897	.67281
Variance	59.582	.453
Skewness (Statistic)	-.671	-.424
Skewness (Standard Error)	.141	.141
Kurtosis	-.744	-.523
Kurtosis (Standard Error)	.281	.281

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

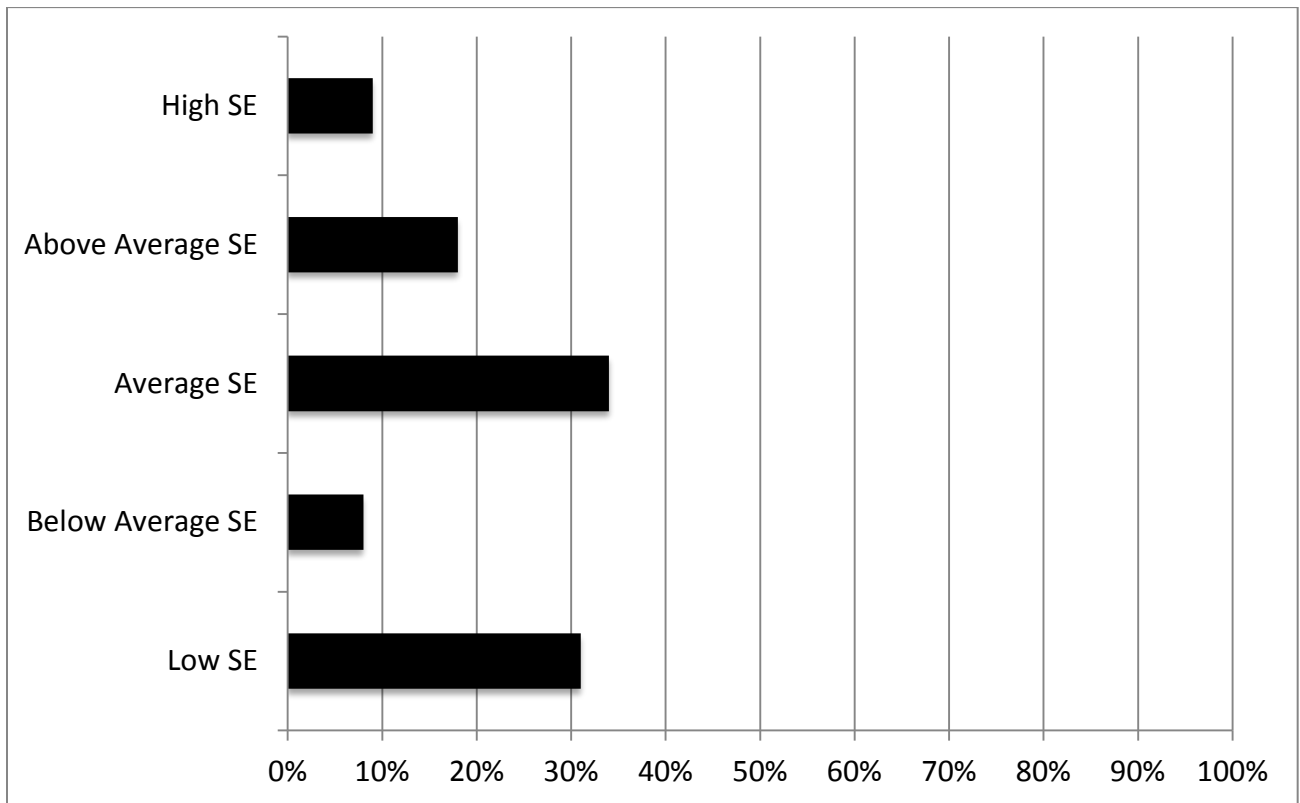
Grade point averages for the participants ranged from 1.07 to 4.0. Even though the minimum grade point average was 1.07 and the maximum grade point average was 4.0, the mean grade point average for all participants was 2.78. According to the previous studies conducted

using grade point average and the grading scale at all community colleges in the state of Mississippi, the term underprepared is used to describe undergraduate students who are not able to maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average in order to stay in good standing with the academic and financial aid guidelines for most schools in Mississippi (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; Balfanz, 2009; Heish, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007).

Based on the results of frequency of self-efficacy scores, 31% (ninety-three) of the students had low self-efficacy scores, 8% (twenty-four) of students had below average self-efficacy scores, 34% (one hundred and two) of students had average self-efficacy scores, 18% (fifty-four) of students had above average self-efficacy scores and 9% (twenty-seven) of the students had high self-efficacy scores. All of these percentages are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Frequency of Self-Efficacy Scores*



Of the ninety-three students with low self-efficacy scores, there was one student with a grade point average of 2.5 or above. Two of the students with below average self-efficacy scores had grade point averages above 2.5 and fourteen of them had grade point averages below 2.5. One hundred and two students had average self-efficacy scores, but only four of the students had grade point averages that were not above 2.5. Three of the fifty-four students with above average self-efficacy scores had grade point averages below 2.5. All of the remaining twenty-seven students who had high self-efficacy scores had grade point averages of 3.0 and above. Eighteen of the students with above average scores had grade point averages of 3.5 and above.

### **Pearson's r Correlation Analysis and Results**

All tests were run using  $\alpha = .05$  and the confidence interval level was 95.0%. The independent variable in this study was self-efficacy levels and the dependent variable was grade point average. Both of these variables contained continuous data (self-efficacy levels and grade point averages) and warranted the use of the Pearson's r correlation. The Pearson's r was used to determine whether or not the two variables were related. This test was used because the r statistic had a range of values from -1.00 (a perfect negative correlation) to 1.00 (a perfect positive correlation) (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006). Pearson's r must be a number that ranges from -1.00 to + 1.00. A negative value of r indicates a negative relationship and a positive value of r indicates a positive relationship. A value of zero indicates no relationship, and as r moves away from zero in either direction it indicates a stronger relationship (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006).

A bootstrap test as well as a nonparametric resampling method used to validate the results of the normality test and further confirm the results from the Pearson's r correlation (Fields,



2013). The bootstrap test allows the researcher to create a large number of datasets to get a distribution of the statistic. Even though researchers use it to create data that they do not have, the bootstrap gives the researcher an idea of what the variability of the data would look like. Usually, the bootstrap sample is done with hundreds or thousands of bootstrap samples because it is a number of the observed dataset obtained by random sampling of the population with replacement from the original dataset (Fields, 2013).

The results from the bootstrap and nonparametric correlation indicate a strong positive correlation,  $r=.85$  and  $p=.000$ , between self-efficacy scores and grade point averages. The BCa (Bias-corrected and accelerated) 95% confidence interval showed that the mean of the self-efficacy score falls between the lower range of .818 and the upper range of .877. This revealed that to the researcher that the confidence interval did not include the value of zero, which was a good thing. If the confidence interval included the value of zero, then the mean could also equal zero. Thus, indicating the significant relationship found in the study could not have existed. Because this interval does not include zero, this test confirmed that the relationship was significant (Fields, 2013). Therefore, based on the bootstrap test and nonparametric correlation test, self-efficacy scores were significantly correlated with grade point average,  $r=.85$ , BCA CI (.818, .877), and  $p=.000$ . The non-parametric version of correlation and the bootstrap tests both confirm a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages of community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi. These findings are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

*Bootstrap Test Correlations*

		SE Score	GPA
SE Score	Pearson Correlation		.850
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		300
Bootstrap *b	Bias		0
	Std. Error		0
	BCa 95% Confidence Interval	Lower	.818
		Upper	.877
GPA	Pearson Correlation		.850
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		300
Bootstrap *b	Bias		-.001
	Std. Error		.015
	BCa 95% Confidence Interval	Lower	.818
		Upper	

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

b. unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1,000 bootstrap samples.

Next, a regression was run to determine whether or not a linear relationship exist between self-efficacy scores and grade point average. The results indicate the Pearson's r value was

$r=.850$  and the  $R^2$  (R Square) value was  $.723$ , which is the effect size for Pearson's  $r$ . The  $R$ ,  $R$  Square and Adjusted  $R$  Values are listed in Appendix H. The  $R^2$  value showed the proportion of shared variance that exist between self-efficacy score and grade point average. Each of these numbers indicates a large effect size and show that the two variables share a large proportion of variance. As explained in the methods section, the Pearson  $r$  test was used because the  $r$  statistic has a range of values from  $-1.00$  (a perfect negative correlation) to  $1.00$  (a perfect positive correlation) (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006). A negative correlation means that as one variable increases in size, the other decreases. A positive correlation means that as one variable increases so does the other.

Pearson's  $r$  is always a number that ranges from  $-1.00$  to  $+1.00$ . A negative value of  $r$  indicates a negative relationship and a positive value of  $r$  indicates a positive relationship (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006). A value of zero indicates no relationship, and as  $r$  moves away from zero in either direction it indicates a stronger relationship. When it reaches either  $-1.00$  or  $+1.00$ , it indicates a relationship that is as strong as an  $r$  relationship can be. Correlations of  $-1.00$  and  $+1.00$  are also called perfect negative and perfect positive relationships (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006). The strength of an  $r$  relationship is indicated by how far  $r$  is above or below zero. According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2006), if  $r = .50+$ , it is considered a large effect. Therefore, the Pearson  $r$  value of  $.850$  and the  $R^2$  value of  $.723$  in this study show a strong, positive relationship between self-efficacy scores and grade point averages of first semester community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi.

In addition to the regression, an ANOVA was completed to make sure the results from the linear regression were accurate. The regression and ANOVA are very similar tests that are usually run to check the accuracy of each other. According to Fields (2013), Regression and

ANOVA always give exactly the same R<sup>2</sup>, which measures the extent to which the variation in all the independent variables together explains the variation in the dependent variable (close to 0 percent means only random connection; close to 100 percent means the independent variables explain nearly everything).

Table 5

*ANOVA Table*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	97.823	1	97.823	776.849	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	37.525	298	.126		
Total	135.348	299			

a. Dependent Variable: GPA

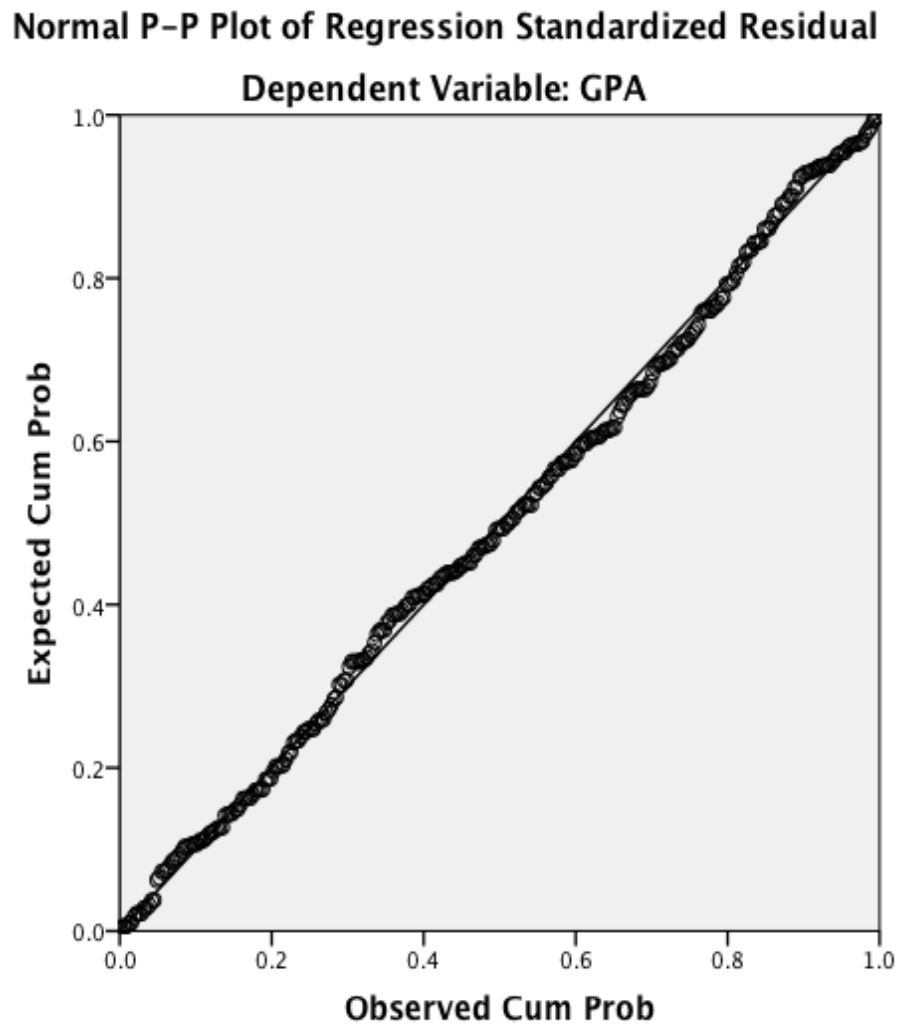
b. Predictors: (Constant), SE Score

The ANOVA table in Table 5 shows the significance at .000, which indicate that a linear relationship or linear regression is a good and acceptable way to explain the relationship (Fields, 2013). The ANOVA table also lists the degrees of freedom for the regression and the residual, the sum of squares, the F Value and the Mean Square. Residual statistics that came from the ANOVA are listed in Appendix I and the Dependent Variable Histogram for Grade Point Average is listed in Appendix J. Additionally, the P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual is listed in Table 7 and the scatter plot is listed in Table 8 to demonstrate the positive linear relationship between self-efficacy scores and grade point averages. The regression line contains

the values from the data model with observed cumulative probability and expected cumulative probability.

Figure 2:

*Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual*



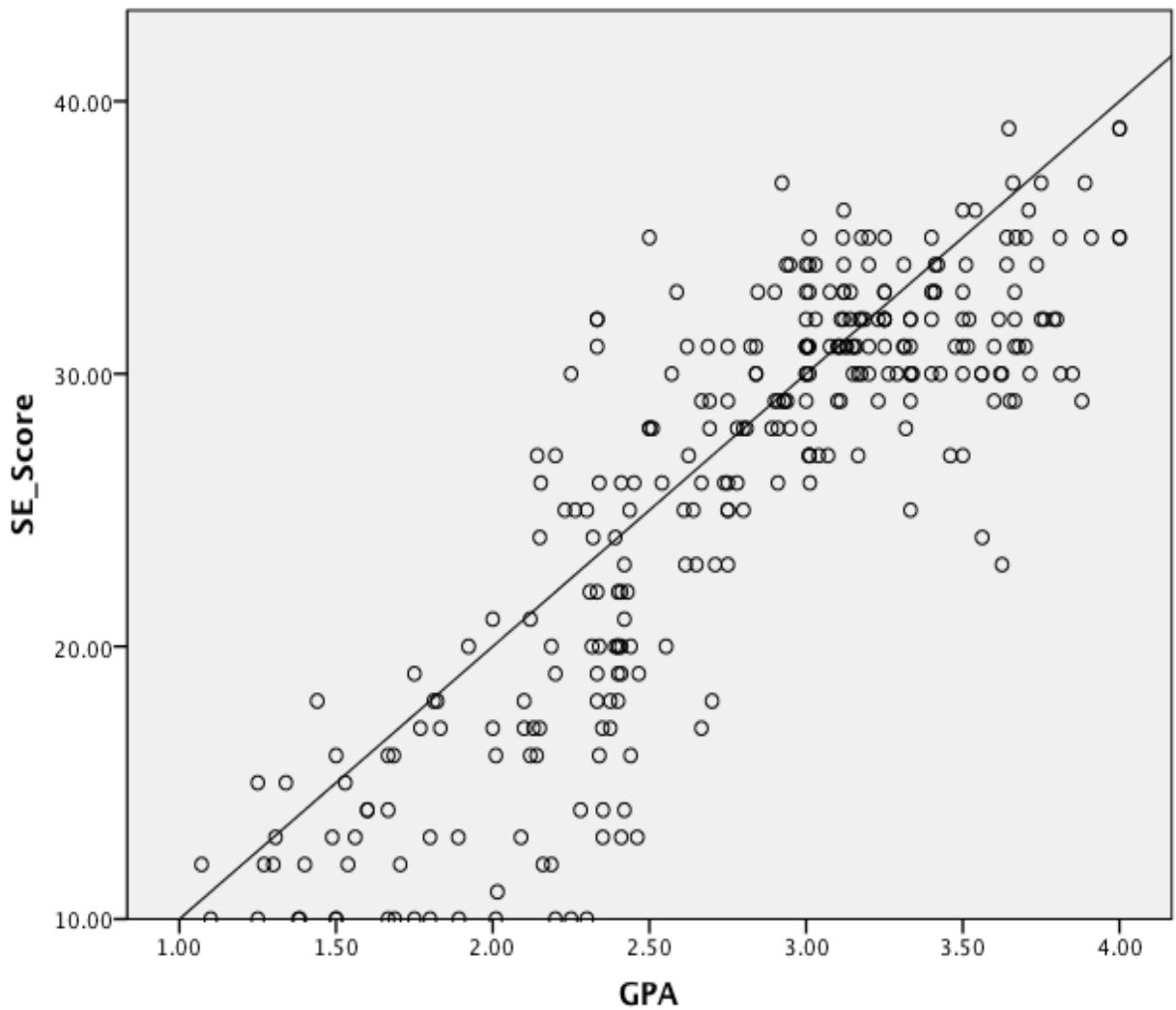
As illustrated in Table 7, a Normal P-Plot of Regression Standardized Residual was completed to check for meeting the assumption that the residuals or error terms are normally distributed. The criteria for normal distribution was the degree to which the plot for the actual values coincided with the darker line of expected values. For this study, the plot of residuals fits

the expected pattern well enough to support a conclusion that the residuals were normally distributed (Fields, 2013).

Figure 3:

*Scatter Plot –Relationship of Self-Efficacy Scores and Grade Point Average*

Relationship of Self-Efficacy Scores and Grade Point Average



The scatter plot or Table 8 further confirmed that there is a linear relationship between the self-efficacy scores and grade point averages for first semester students from critical need areas at the selected community colleges in Mississippi. Because the pattern of dots goes

upward as grade point averages increase and self-efficacy scores increase, a high, positive correlation exists between these two variables.

## **Conclusion**

Chapter IV included the results and data analysis as presented in chapter III. Results from the Pearson's  $r$  correlation and linear regression revealed that in the hypothesis significant relationships exist between the predictor and criterion variables. The following significant relationship was documented; therefore, the corresponding hypothesis was rejected: There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy levels and grade point averages for community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi during their first semester of college. Not only did the relationship exist, but it was a strong, positive linear relationship between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages.

Finally, descriptive data from the self-efficacy scores and grade point averages revealed that the higher the students' self-efficacy was, the higher their grade point average. Students with lower grade point averages had self-efficacy scores that resembled their academic progress. On the other hand, students with higher self-efficacy scores had grade point averages to confirm this positive relationship. Chapter V provides conclusions from this study as well as suggestions for future studies related to this topic.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of the research study that includes historical and theoretical foundations, description of participants, and methods of data collection. These conclusions are described based on the data analysis from Chapter IV, and they explain how the conclusions relate to previous research in the areas of post secondary education, higher education, and undergraduate retention. Then, the recommendations for future research on this study are discussed.

#### **Summary of the Study**

This study was initiated to examine the relationship between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages for students from critical need areas in Mississippi. Retention rates in Mississippi have caused community colleges and all other post secondary educators and administrators to become alarmed at the decline in students who stay in college long enough to obtain a degree (Roman, 2007; Summers, 2002). The research question sought to determine if self-efficacy played a role in the academic achievement of the freshman, community college students. As addressed in the introduction, the available literature and research on non-cognitive skills such as self-efficacy is limited, but the early studies have involved grade point averages, attendance, and college retention (Becker & Gable, 2009); beliefs and purpose in life (DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009); goal orientation (Hsieh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Komarraju & Nadler, 2013); and academic preparation, outcomes, and aspirations (Multon, Brown & Lent,



1991; Riehl, 1994). The consensus emerging from these studies showed a growing concern to discover what admission counselors and institutions of higher learning can do to retain the students who enroll in college each year.

Although the previous topics are diverse, researchers have not identified the relationship between the non-cognitive skill self-efficacy and first semester grade point averages. Much of the literature clearly defines student retention and self-efficacy, individually, and focuses on academic achievement over a four year, eight semester academic timeline for college completion (Becker & Gable, 2009; DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009; Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991). However, there is a concern for how first semester grade point averages and their relationship to self-efficacy will impact the post secondary retention rates at community colleges. This research addressed concerns regarding freshman year academic achievement of community college students in Mississippi from critical need areas through an examination of first semester grade point averages and self-efficacy scores. The researcher sought to add to the body of the research on this topic and assist high school and college administrators, college administrators and others in the field of education. Thus, this research will assist high schools in preparing students for college and it will improve college retention rates for academic success.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Albert Bandura (1997b), a widely known researcher of self-efficacy emphasizes the many aspects of self-efficacy in his book *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. As defined in the book, self-efficacy refers to the belief or confidence an individual has about his or her ability to complete a task. According to Bandura (1997b), individuals who have no confidence in their capability to successfully complete a task have not tapped into the realm of exercising their control of self-efficacy. Unlike several other traits that are categorized as non-cognitive, self-

efficacy is completely unique and individual to each person (Bandura, 1997b). This study focused on self-efficacy because it is a non-cognitive component that can be measured for every individual student who enrolls in post secondary school. Regardless to whether the student's self-efficacy level or score is high or low, it can be measured.

According to Bandura (1997b), self-efficacy beliefs are an important part of human motivation and behavior as well as influencing the actions that can affect one's life. He explains that self-efficacy "refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p.2). Bandura goes on to show how self-efficacy is measured along three basic scales- magnitude, strength and generality. Self-efficacy magnitude measures the difficulty level an individual feels is required to perform a certain task. Self-efficacy strength refers to the amount of conviction an individual has about performing successfully at diverse levels of difficulty. Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy provided the research with a theoretical foundation to use for this study. Unlike most of the previous research, which has involved more specific self-efficacy instruments (Becker & Gable, 2009; DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009; Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991; Hsieh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Komarraju & Nadler, 2013; Riehl, 1994), this study utilized the general self-efficacy scale by Ralf Schwarzar to ensure that the results would be generalizable.

## **Participants**

The sample was drawn from a pool of 1200 students enrolled as freshman from critical need areas in the state of Mississippi. Each of the three community colleges provided the researcher with an excel spreadsheet of the email addresses of the students in their service areas (high schools that are in close proximity of the school in which the community college provides service to the community) prior to conducting the study. The Office of Institutional Research

from each of the community colleges chose their service areas because they said a large amount of their students from critical need areas attend high school and graduate from critical need areas in their surrounding communities. To begin the process, an Excel spreadsheet with student email addresses was created to add ease of distribution for importing the list of students to Qualtrics. The spreadsheet contained email addresses from all three community colleges because the study did not require a campus breakdown of self-efficacy scores and/or grade point averages.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher conducted the study at the end of the participants' second semester in the community college, which was during the months of March, April and May. Data was gathered until the sample size of at least 100 (50 males and 50 females) was collected at each of the three community colleges through the use of follow-up emails and face-to-face visits at each of campuses. The surveys were administered via Qualtrics and paper, but the participants remained anonymous because their names were not given to the researcher or included on the paper survey. No other individually identifying information was requested from the student. To ensure that all information was secure and confidential, no other individuals had access to the participants' data other than the researcher.

The researcher distributed an email, individually, to each student on the campus who graduated from a critical need area with an introductory consent form to obtain his or her permission to participate in this research study. The consent form allowed the participants to read over their rights and responsibilities and agree or disagree to participate in this research study. The appropriate sample for this study was reached after data was collected for a total of seven weeks (even though the researcher anticipated collecting data over a period of up to three months consecutively). Afterwards, the students' first semester final grade point averages were

confirmed from the university's registrar's office and/or the online student records database to obtain accuracy. Then, the students' grade point averages and self-efficacy scale scores were analyzed to determine which students had high self-efficacy levels and high grade point averages and which students had low self-efficacy levels and low grade point averages. The researcher added the student identification numbers, gender, grade point averages and self-efficacy scores to the original Excel spreadsheet used to distribute emails through Qualtrics. After looking at this data, the researcher calculated the mean scores and standard deviation of scores and ran the Pearson's r Correlation statistical test through the use of SPSS. A regression was also done to maintain accuracy within the study.

### **Quantitative Conclusions**

The results of this study showed a strong, positive relationship (.85 between self-efficacy scores and grade point averages of first semester community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi. Based on the descriptive data, Pearson's r Correlation, and the regression analysis, students with grade point averages that were less than 2.5 had lower self-efficacy scores than those students who had grade point averages above 2.5. Unlike most of the previous research on freshmen year student achievement, this finding revealed that self-efficacy, a non-cognitive skill, impacts student grade point averages. A correlation with the strength of .85 is strong enough to say that a positive relationship exists between self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages for students at Mississippi Community colleges. Likewise, the data from the study showed that the higher the self-efficacy scores, the higher the grade point averages were. An example of this is the student with the highest grade point average, a 4.0, who had a self-efficacy score of 39. Such correlations show that the relationship between self-efficacy scores and grade point averages exist.

The findings from this study indicate that even though a student from a “critical needs area” completes all pre-requisites for graduation, meeting the high school graduation requirements does not equate readiness for college. All three hundred of the students who were used in this correlational study were deemed “ready for college,” whether they were admitted on conditional/probationary terms or not during their first few semesters of school. Similar to what Heish, Sullivan and Guerra (2007) found in their study, this study showed that a student’s belief about how likely he or she is to succeed does ultimately effect academic achievement. The results showed that seven, which is less than three percent of students had self-efficacy scores that did not correlate with their grade point average. Therefore, it is equally important that educators incorporate instructional strategies and activities that will assist in developing or increasing the level of self-efficacy students have within themselves. Teachers at the secondary level will do a better job preparing students, which will assist teachers and administrators at the post secondary level.

The findings from this study (the fact that a strong, positive relationship exist between self-efficacy and grade point average) support the importance of teachers at both the secondary and post secondary levels working together for a common goal of increasing self-efficacy and other non-cognitive skills in students. Findings from this study are similar to those of Paul Tough (2012) who believed that non-cognitive skills are objectively measured based on personal/situational judgments, associations and reasoning. Better student preparation for college will occur because students who enter college straight out of high school will feel much better about their ability to succeed and based on the results from this study (.85, strong, positive correlation), their grade point averages will likely increase. Furthermore, examining the demographic data of all students who participated in this study confirms that students from

critical need areas usually require more motivation and encouragement from their teachers in order to be successful.

Another significant implication of this study is the importance of high schools giving students assignments that will match the rigor of college level coursework. Many students who have enrolled in college with low self-efficacy perceive the coursework as being far beyond what they are accustomed to doing in high school (Heish, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007). Another component that would assist secondary and post-secondary educators in preparing students for college is discussing the expectation levels for freshmen year. The more familiar freshmen students are with expectations, the more likely they are to develop self-efficacy that leads to them being successful in college.

Although college admission counselors can determine grade point average, ACT scores, and the pass or fail status of standardized tests, the results from this study supports the importance of adding a component in the admission process that will entail a non-cognitive skill such as self-efficacy. A questionnaire to measure self-efficacy or a freshman course that includes instruction that will focus on self-efficacy would be beneficial to the post secondary institutions. Currently, all of the community colleges in Mississippi have open admission, which allows them to admit a diverse group of students regardless to how much the student makes on the ACT or what type of high school grade point average the student has earned. Adding a component in the admission requirement that will give schools and admission counselors a “glimpse” of how students perceive themselves (DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009). All of these components will strengthen the retention rates and decrease the attrition rates of community colleges and four-year institutions of higher learning.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The study was limited to three community colleges in one state, therefore the results cannot be generalized to populations beyond these regional community college population who mirror this demographic. A future study could entail all community colleges in the state of Mississippi, a number of community colleges in different regions around the United States, a combination of community colleges, colleges, and universities (they all make up the area of post secondary education). A larger population would also make the study more generalizable when adding to the field of education. Only students who graduated from critical need areas in the state of Mississippi were included in this research study. This research topic could be studied a lot further with the use of students in a chosen state or region, whether it is a critical need area or not.

Another limitation for the study was the time in which the survey was administered by the researcher. This study was completed near the end of the semester, so it could have been possible for some students to answer the self-efficacy questions based on how they felt about their current academic semester grades instead of school as a whole. Because the survey was administered at the end of the academic year, some participants may have responded to the questions on the instruments based on the way they felt about their quality of instruction and/or pedagogical approach. In addition, the sample size of three hundred prevented the use of inferential statistical methods to further investigate data within sample subgroups.

While identifying the limitations of the study, the academic community must acknowledge that institutional and/or state level research is needed to give experts in the field of education a good picture of the complex issues of first semester grade point averages, self-efficacy scores, critical need area, and, above all student retention at the post secondary level.

Therefore, the study produced significant results that will contribute to the emerging body of student retention and community college research as well as yields a list of recommendations for future research.

Given the current situation of retention rates for colleges and universities in the nation, post-secondary education institutions must become more proactive in identifying students who may potentially struggle with completing the coursework before the students enter their junior and senior years. An important step in improving student retention is to help students understand how a personal variable such as self-efficacy determines whether or not they are prepared to successfully complete two to four years of college coursework and obtain a certificate or degree. Based on the outcome of this study, researchers might consider the following list of questions and suggestions to guide future research:

1. Given the widespread of recent research in non-cognitive skills, what additional non-cognitive skills should be identified when students are enrolled in college?
2. Examine the relationship of pre and post self-efficacy scores for freshman before they start their first year of college and after they have finished their first year of college.
3. Should self-efficacy scores and first semester grade point averages be different for students who do not graduate from a critical need area?
4. What is the single most predictive factor for freshmen who enroll in school with high grade point averages but have low self efficacy scores?



5. Since high school grade point average is well documented in the research as the best indicator of college success, at what point does high school grade point average become ineffective as a resource for identifying which students are ready for college?
6. Examine the relationship of self-efficacy scores and grade point averages over a four-year time frame.
7. What effect does high school course work have on self-efficacy levels for graduating seniors who are enrolling in post-secondary schools?

## **Conclusion**

Findings from this study confirmed that high school grade point averages and self-efficacy scores have a relationship as it relates to first semester community college students from critical need areas in Mississippi. Students who had higher self-efficacy levels had higher grade point averages, but students who had low levels of self-efficacy had lower grade point averages. The strong, positive relationship that exist between these two variables show that self-efficacy is as significant as high school grade point average, standardized test scores, placement exams, and/or ACT scores. Previous research indicated the need for further research in the areas of non-cognitive skills and student readiness for college (Becker & Gable, 2009; DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009; Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991; Hsieh, Sullivan & Guerra, 2007; Komarraju & Nadler, 2013; Riehl, 1994). This study sought to add to the body of growing research in these areas.

Since several researchers have deemed high school grade point averages as the best indicator of college success (Geiser & Santelices, 2007; Cohn, Balch & Bradley, 2004), it is

incumbent upon the community colleges and high schools to collaborate to determine strategies for incorporating a non-cognitive component such as self-efficacy level into admission requirements for college. Furthermore, community colleges in Mississippi should utilize multiple methods for admitting students in college, especially if they want to retain the students beyond their first semester or freshman year.

Findings from this study support the use and effectiveness of self-efficacy scores as a predictor of post secondary academic achievement. Moreover, study results validate previous studies suggesting that non-cognitive skills are integral in predicting a student's academic success at the post-secondary level. This study investigated one primary question: What is the relationship between the self-efficacy levels of freshman year community college students from critical need areas and their first semester academic achievement during their freshman year? Findings indicate there is a relationship between self-efficacy levels of freshman year community college students from critical need areas and their first semester academic achievement during their freshman year. Additionally, the researcher discovered that a strong, positive relationship exists between these two variables.

Results from this study do not clearly answer whether or not self-efficacy scores will be a better indicator than high school grade point averages, standardized test scores, placement exam scores, and ACT scores, but findings do indicate that a non-cognitive skill such as self-efficacy should be considered in admission requirements if student retention rates are to increase at the post-secondary level. The results from this study do offer insight into the relationship of non-cognitive skills and academic achievement because there is a relationship between self-efficacy and grade point averages. Finally, results from this study support the need for additional institutional research at both the secondary and post secondary level to track self-efficacy levels

and student success over an expanded period of time. The information gathered from this study contributes to the field of education and the community colleges because it contains evidence-based results that could aid in the advancement of the community college system.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES



APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant:

You are invited to take part in a research study that is part of my requirements for a dissertation in the doctoral program at The University of Mississippi. My dissertation committee chairperson, Dr. Rosemary Oliphant Ingham, will supervise this research study.

The purpose of this project is to determine if a relationship exists between self-efficacy levels and first semester grade point averages in community college students from critical need areas. The information we collect will be used to advance secondary and post secondary research in the field of education.

If you would like to take part in our research, you will need to sign this consent form, fill out a demographic questionnaire and complete a General Self-Efficacy Survey. All documents will be electronically collected and stored in a secure Qualtrics database. At the end of this study, the researcher will analyze this data.

Only the researcher and the dissertation committee will see the results of all completed surveys. There are no foreseeable risks for your involvement in this study. We are collecting data to further advance the research on student readiness and retention and to complete a requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree at the University of Mississippi.

You are free to withdraw this research at any time. If you have any questions or concerns, please call one of us at the numbers listed below. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Researcher:  
Chairperson/Advisor:  
Elmira Ratliff, Ed.S  
Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
Office of Curriculum & Instruction  
3825 Ridgewood Road  
Jackson, MS 39211  
[eratlif2@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:eratlif2@go.olemiss.edu)  
(601)529-3700

Dissertation Committee  
  
Dr. Rosemary Oliphant Ingham  
Department of Teacher Education  
School of Education  
331 Guyton Hall  
University, MS 38677  
[ringham@olemiss.edu](mailto:ringham@olemiss.edu)  
(662) 915-7589

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to take part in this study.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Release of Rights to Written or Recorded Information**

My signature below indicates that I release all rights, including copyright rights for the use of any recorded or written information that I provide during this study. I understand that the researcher will have access to my first semester grade point average. With this release, I grant the University of Mississippi and the aforementioned researches the permission to use, reproduce, copy, and distribute my words in whole or in part into derivative works without limitation. I indemnify and hold the University and the researchers harmless from any claims of infringement of copyright by any third party regarding my words. I agree that I will receive no further consideration and no royalty payments for the use of my words.

Please choose one of the following options. (If students click yes, the survey begins. If students click no, they will exit out of the email.)

Yes, I fully agree to all of the above terms.

No, I do not fully agree to all of the above terms.

My signature below means that I agree fully to all of the above terms.

---

First/Last Name (Please Print)	Signature	Date
--------------------------------	-----------	------

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

Participant I.D. #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Community College: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Circle ONE answer for each of the following questions:

1. Gender:        Male            Female
  
2. Race:            White/Caucasian        African American        Hispanic        Other
  
3. High School Grade Point Average:
  
4. High School /School District:
  
5. Have you ever taken any Advance Placement Courses?
  
6. Did you have any problems completing your freshman coursework?
  
7. End of First Semester Grade Point Average:
  
8. When do you anticipate graduating?
  
9. Do you give the above researcher to have access to your first semester grade point average?    Yes    No

## APPENDIX C: SELF-EFFICACY SURVEY

## GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY SURVEY

This survey measures general self-efficacy which is your belief that you can succeed at a certain task or situation (Bandura, 1997). Below is a list of feelings dealing with general thoughts about you. Circle the amount of your agreement with each item. Please be honest in your responses.

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.  
1=Strongly Disagree                      2=Disagree      3=Agree              4=Strongly Agree

## APPENDIX D: OUTLIER DATA



### Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
SE_Score	300	99.0%	3	1.0%	303	100.0%
GPA	300	99.0%	3	1.0%	303	100.0%

### Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error	
SE_Score	Mean	25.9467	.44565	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	25.0696	
		Upper Bound	26.8237	
	5% Trimmed Mean	26.2407		
	Median	29.0000		
	Variance	59.582		
	Std. Deviation	7.71897		
	Minimum	10.00		
	Maximum	39.00		
	Range	29.00		
	Interquartile Range	12.00		
	Skewness	-.671	.141	
	Kurtosis	-.744	.281	
	GPA	Mean	2.7816	.03884
95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Lower Bound	2.7052	
		Upper Bound	2.8581	
5% Trimmed Mean		2.8019		
Median		2.9105		
Variance		.453		
Std. Deviation		.67281		
Minimum		1.07		
Maximum		4.00		
Range		2.93		
Interquartile Range		.93		
Skewness		-.424	.141	
Kurtosis		-.523	.281	

APPENDIX D: OUTLIER DATA CONTINUED

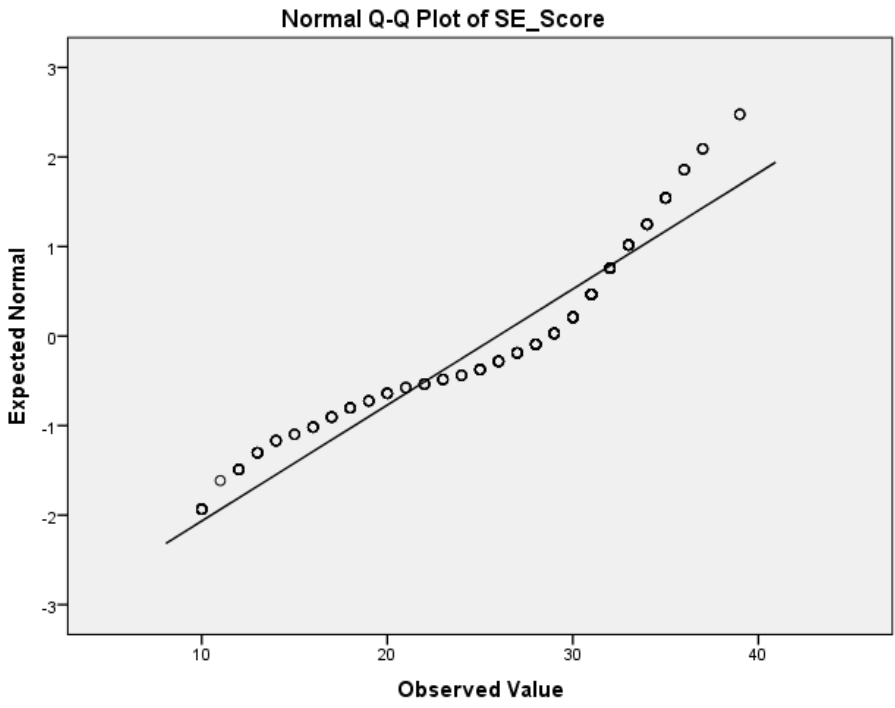
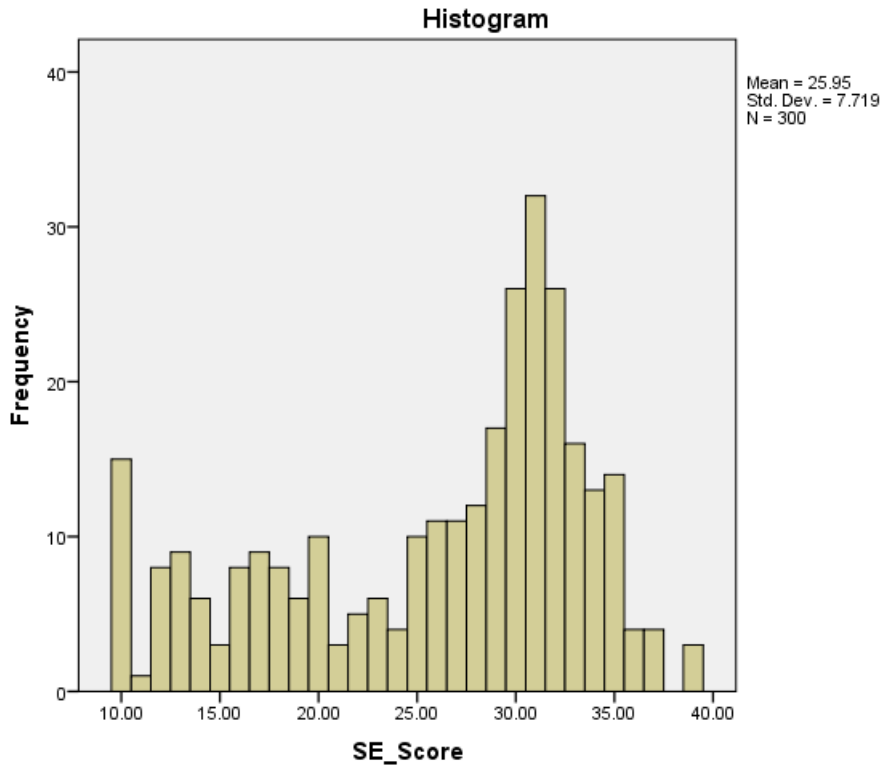
**Extreme Values**

			Case Number	Value
SE_Score	Highest	1	61	39.00
		2	62	39.00
		3	76	39.00
		4	19	37.00
		5	89	37.00 <sup>a</sup>
	Lowest	1	44	10.00
		2	43	10.00
		3	42	10.00
		4	41	10.00
		5	40	10.00 <sup>b</sup>
GPA	Highest	1	49	4.00
		2	50	4.00
		3	61	4.00
		4	62	4.00
		5	73	3.91
	Lowest	1	11	1.07
		2	13	1.10
		3	23	1.25
		4	15	1.25
		5	25	1.27

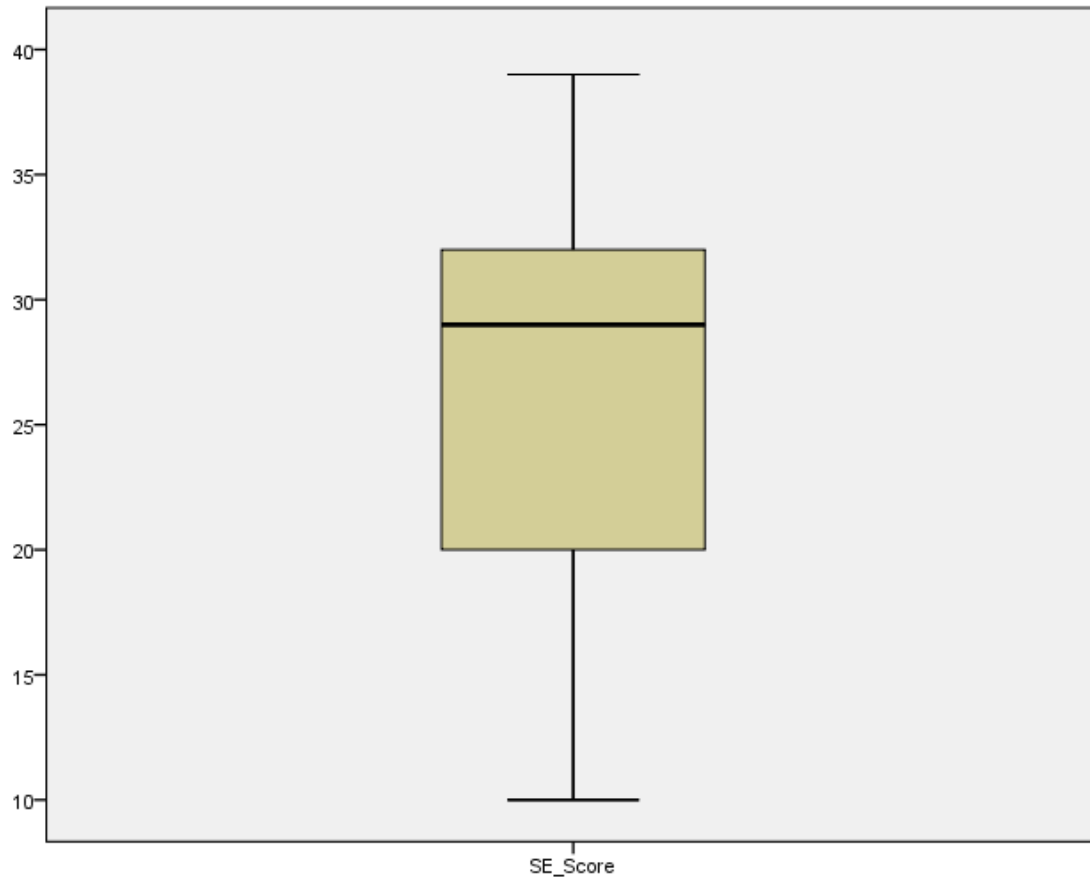
a. Only a partial list of cases with the value 37.00 are shown in the table of upper extremes.

b. Only a partial list of cases with the value 10.00 are shown in the table of lower extremes.

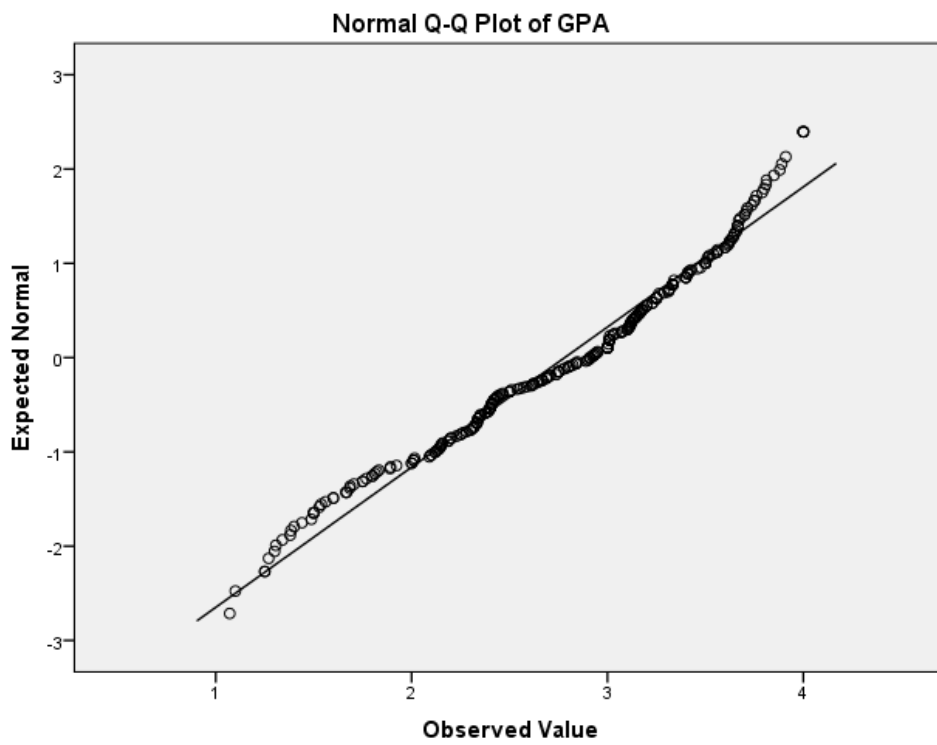
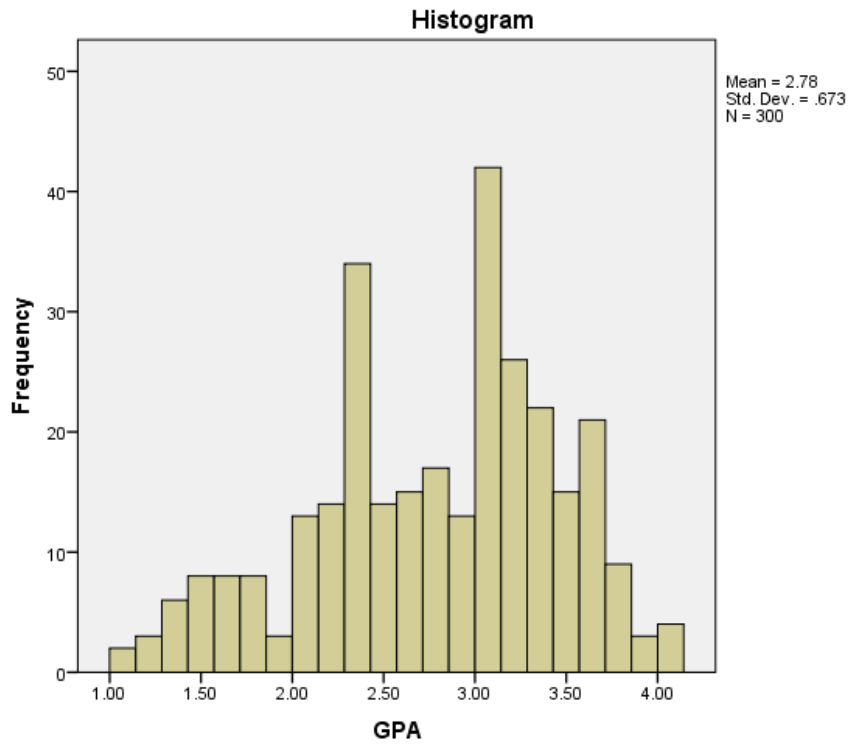
APPENDIX E: HISTOGRAM, QQ PLOT, & PP PLOTS FOR TESTS OF NORMALITY



Normal PP Plot of SE Score

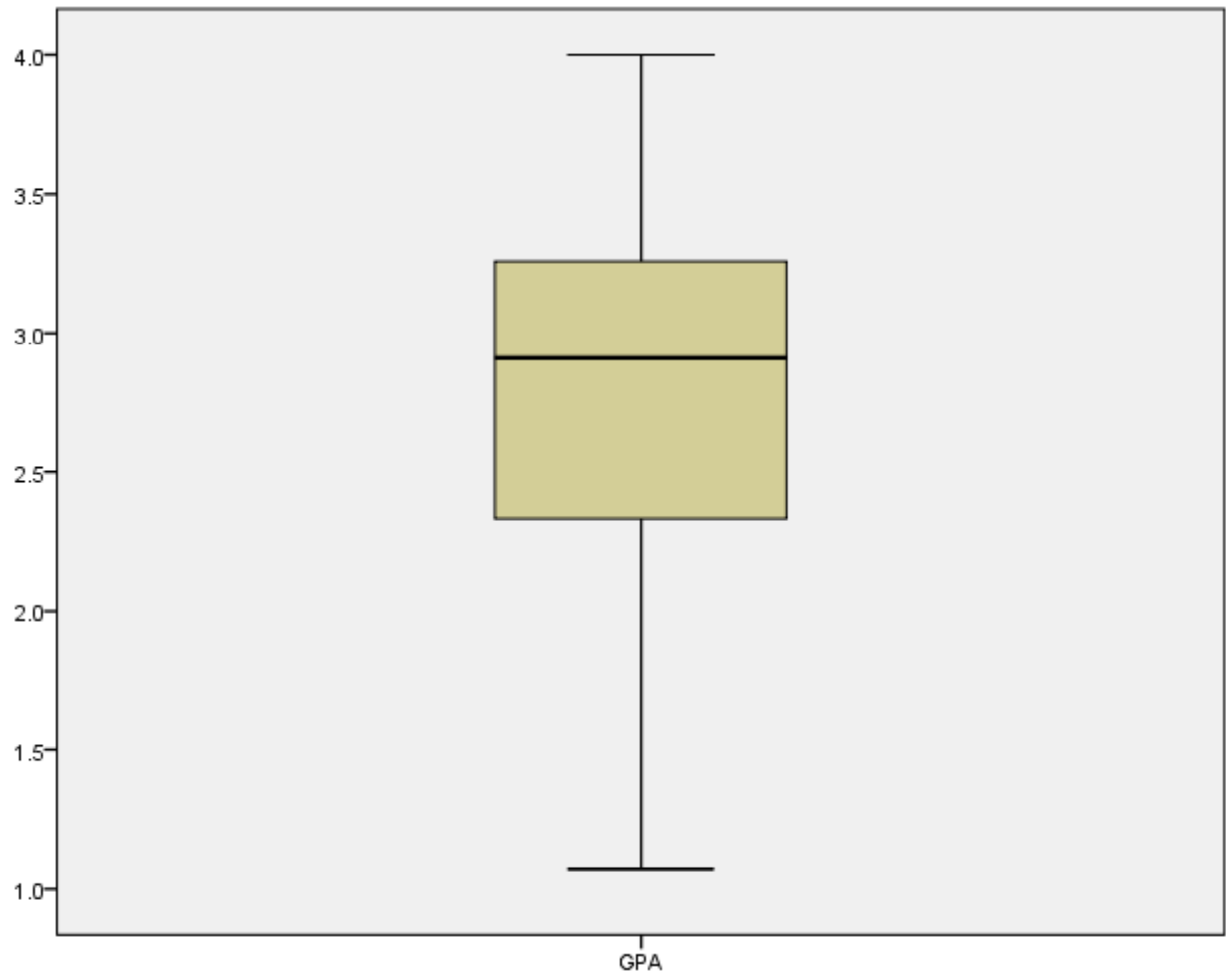


APPENDIX F: HISTOGRAM, QQ PLOT, & PP PLOTS FOR TESTS OF NORMALITY





**Normal PP Plot of GPA**



## APPENDIX G: CORRELATION RESULTS

<b>Correlations</b>				SE_Score	GPA	
SE_Score	Pearson Correlation			1	.850**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	
	N			300	300	
	Bootstrap <sup>b</sup>	Bias			0	-.001
		Std. Error			0	.015
	BCa 95% Confidence Interval		Lower		.	.818
			Upper		.	.877
GPA	Pearson Correlation			.850**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000		
	N			300	300	
	Bootstrap <sup>b</sup>	Bias			-.001	0
		Std. Error			.015	0
	BCa 95% Confidence Interval		Lower		.818	.
			Upper		.877	.

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

b. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

APPENDIX H: REGRESSION ANALYSIS & PEARSON'S R VALUE

### Correlations

		GPA	SE_Score
Pearson Correlation	GPA	1.000	.850
	SE_Score	.850	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	GPA	.	.000
	SE_Score	.000	.
N	GPA	300	300
	SE_Score	300	300

a. Dependent Variable: GPA

b. All requested variables entered.

### Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.850 <sup>a</sup>	.723	.722	.35486

a. Predictors: (Constant), SE\_Score

b. Dependent Variable: GPA

## APPENDIX I: RESIDUALS STATISTICS

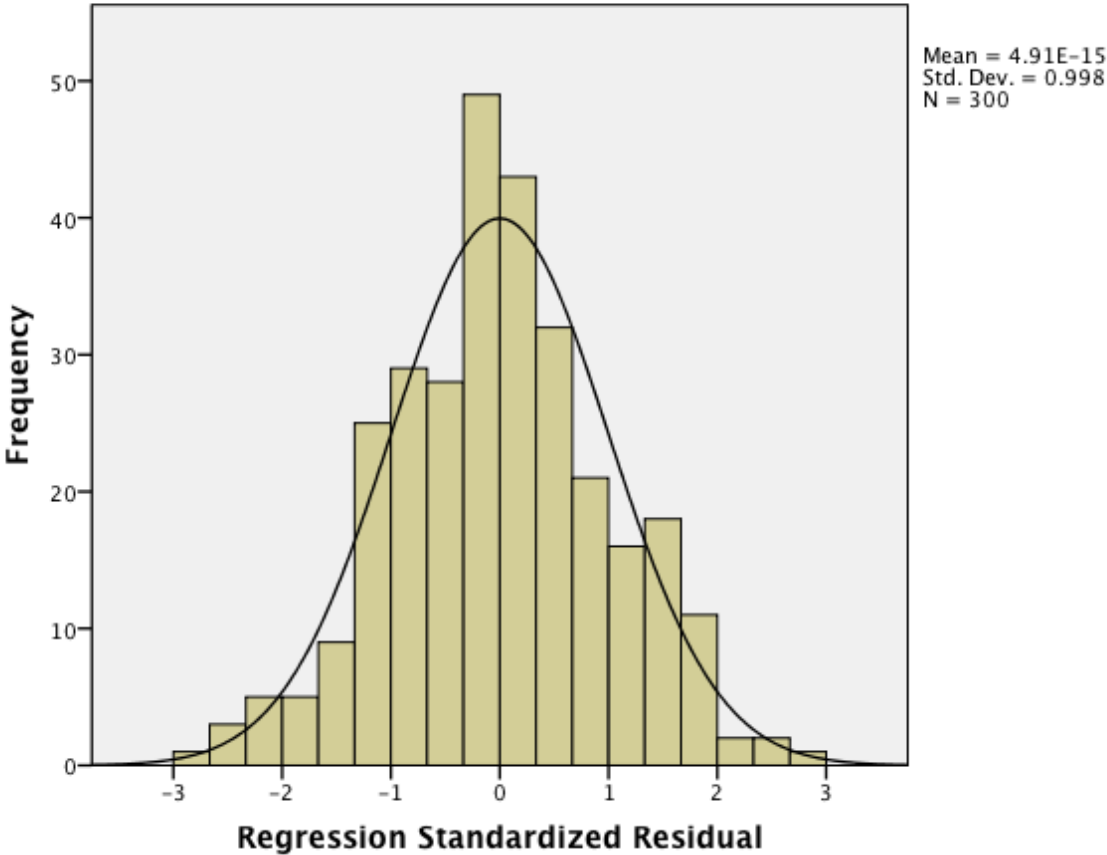
**Residuals Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.6000	3.7489	2.7816	.57198	300
Std. Predicted Value	-2.066	1.691	.000	1.000	300
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.020	.047	.028	.007	300
Adjusted Predicted Value	1.5874	3.7502	2.7816	.57211	300
Residual	-.95250	1.06172	.00000	.35426	300
Std. Residual	-2.684	2.992	.000	.998	300
Stud. Residual	-2.695	2.998	.000	1.002	300
Deleted Residual	-.96011	1.06579	.00003	.35673	300
Stud. Deleted Residual	-2.724	3.039	.000	1.005	300
Mahal. Distance	.000	4.268	.997	1.116	300
Cook's Distance	.000	.036	.003	.005	300
Centered Leverage Value	.000	.014	.003	.004	300

APPENDIX J: REGRESSION STANDARDIZED RESIDUAL



**Histogram**  
**Dependent Variable: GPA**



VITA

## VITA

Elmira Ratliff

### EDUCATION

**Ph.D.**, Major: Teacher Education: English Emphasis; University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

Anticipated Graduation Date: December 2014

**Ed.S.**, Major: Educational Leadership; University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

Graduation Date: May 2013

**Ed.S.**, Major: Curriculum & Instruction: English Emphasis; University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

Graduation Date: May 2011

**M.Ed.**, Major: English, Mississippi College, Clinton, MS

Graduation Date: May 2009

**B.A.**, Major: Secondary Education; English, Alcorn State University, Alcorn State, MS

Graduation Date: May 2007; Honors and Awards: National Dean's List

### LICENSURES & CERTIFICATIONS

**Mississippi Educator License (2007-2017) Class AAA Endorsement Area: 119 English (7-12)**

**Mississippi Administrator License (2013-2022) Class AAA Endorsement Area: 486 Administrator**

### CAREER RELATED EXPERIENCES

#### *Curriculum Specialist*

Mississippi Community College Board, Jackson, MS January 2014-Present

- Provide curriculum leadership and support to the Career & Technical Divisions for the community colleges
- Collaborate with the community colleges and industries in MS to write, revise and edit curriculum
- Research best practices for national certification in the programs offered by Career & Technical Education
- Work closely with businesses and industries to ensure that the curriculum and equipment used in various program will benefit students as they enter the workforce

*Adjunct Instructor--Online/Face-to-Face (ENG 0123, ENG 1113 & ENG 1123)*

Holmes Community College, Goodman, MS June 2011-Present

- Prepared course materials with the use of technology and hands-on activities
- Kept student records of grades and attendance through the Blackboard website
- Coordinated the teaching process with the needs of various occupations and age levels
- Performed the duties and functions of an instructor as they pertain to the teaching of courses
- Advised students about taking the required coursework and setting a timeline for degree completion

*Co-Instructor -Under the Direction of Academic Advisor- (EDSE 642)*

The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS January 2013-May 2013

- Provided graduate students with the skills necessary to teach reading and language arts to secondary students
- Created innovative lessons for implementing various aspects of the Common Core Requirements
- Showed the students how to incorporate the rules of grammar and writing through thematic literature units
- Kept accurate records of attendance and the completion of assignments

*Principal/Assistant Principal Intern*

George Middle School, North Carrollton, MS June 2011-July 2013

- Served as chairperson and member of the TST Behavioral and Academic Committee for the school
- Coordinated “Teacher Academy” for training and mentoring new teachers in the district
- Served as Assistant Testing Coordinator for district and state wide exams
- Served as member on School Safety & School Leadership Committees
- Provided professional development to all staff members on how to incorporate the English across the curriculum
- Participated in “Training of the Trainers” for Common Core Implementation

*English Teacher (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade English)*

George Middle School, North Carrollton, MS August 2010-July 2013

- Chaired the Language Arts Department through the planning of lessons and implementation process
- Instructed students on how to implement the processes of writing and reading comprehension
- Provided individualized instruction to all students in preparation for the MCT 2 Tests
- Constructed Language Arts Curriculum for the George Middle School
- Coordinated and implemented the activities for the MS Reading Fair Project

*Adjunct Instructor (EDU 345-Language Arts for Children)*

Alcorn State University, Alcorn State, MS May 2010-June 2010

- Taught undergraduate students to effectively plan and implement instructional strategies for Elementary English
- Provided mentoring for students as they prepare to implement best practices inside the classroom
- Served as an advisor for undergraduate students in the Elementary & Secondary Education Program
- Advised students about taking the required coursework and setting a timeline for degree completion

*English Teacher (English I, II, III, & IV)*

Port Gibson High School, Port Gibson, MS August 2007-May 2010

- Served on the school leadership team for making decisions about new hires, discipline and curriculum
- Nominated as English Department Chairperson to plan meetings and implement effective instructional practices
- Instructed students on how to implement the processes of writing and reading comprehension
- Compiled an organized electronic file of each student's data for instructional and documentation purposes
- Coordinated and implemented activities for each academic year (High School Reading Fair & English Club)

*Tutor*

Alcorn State University, Alcorn Writing Center, Alcorn State, MS, August 2004-May 2007

- Planned and coordinated the bi-weekly calendar of appointments for tutorial sessions
- Trained and supervised new tutors with the skills and procedures necessary to become effective tutors
- Recruited students to utilize the services offered by the writing center and English Department
- Presented writing workshops in undergraduate Composition and Literature classes

*Tutor/English Instructor*

Alcorn State University, Student Support Services Program, Alcorn State, MS, August 2003-May 2005

- Provided academic assistance in English for students enrolled in Composition and Literature courses
- Completed clerical duties that involved typing memos, mailing letters, answering the phone, etc.
- Organized mentoring and tutoring services for participants of the program as well as created flyers for recruitment
- Served the Director of Student Support Services by assisting with all activities, programs and trips

**PROFESSIONAL AWARDS & RECOGNITION**

- October 2013 "Trainer of Trainers Award for Professional Development Trainings" (MAE)
- June 2013 "M-STAR Trainer Award" (MDE, USM & MAE)
- May 2013 Chosen as one of the "Faces of Ole Miss" for Recruitment & Advertising Purposes (UM)
- February 2013 "Teacher of the Month" (George Middle School)
- June 2012 "English Department Hall of Fame" (Alcorn State University)
- March 2012 "Teacher of the Month" Award (George Middle School)
- April 2011 "Teacher of the Year" Award (George Middle School)
- August 2010 Chosen as "Language Arts Department Chairperson" (George Middle School)
- April 2009 "Teacher of the Year" Award (Port Gibson High School)
- August 2009 Nominated for "English Department Chairperson" (Port Gibson High School)
- August 2008 Featured in National Education Association Article "Teacher Cliques"
- October 2008 "Teacher of the Month" Award (Port Gibson High School)
- Fall 2006 "Southwest Writing Conference" Planning Committee Member (Alcorn State University)

## **PROFFESIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATIONS**

- August 2013- “M-STAR for Teachers” Houston, MS & Prentiss, MS
- July 2013-“M-STAR for Teachers” Grenada, MS
- February 2012-“Common Core Standards: Language Arts” North Carrollton, MS
- November 2011- “Time Management for Teachers” McComb, MS
- March 2011-“Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension” Jackson, MS
- January 2010- “Teaching Writing Across the Curriculum” Port Gibson, MS
- September 2009-“Teaching Language Arts Across the Curriculum” Port Gibson, MS
- March 2009-“Time Management for Teachers” Jackson, MS

## **AFFILIATIONS**

- Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), Member
- American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), Member
- American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), Member
- National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), Member
- National Education Association (NEA), Member
- Mississippi Association of Educators (NEA), Member/Professional Development Trainer
- Carroll County Association of Educators (MAE), Past President
- Sigma Tau Delta National English Honor Society, Member/Past President
- Carroll/Montgomery/Grenada Alumni Chapter of Alcorn State University, Scholarship Committee Chairperson
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, Member

## **REFERENCES**

Dr. Robin Parker, Director of Curriculum & Instruction (Mississippi Community College Board)  
[rparker@mccb.edu](mailto:rparker@mccb.edu) (662) 418-8865

Dr. Cindy Scurria, Professor & Chair of the English Department (Alcorn State University)  
[cscurria@alcorn.edu](mailto:cscurria@alcorn.edu) (601) 877-6401

Dr. RoSusan Bartee, Professor & Coordinator of Leadership and Counselor Education (University of Mississippi)  
[rdbartee@olemiss.edu](mailto:rdbartee@olemiss.edu) (662) 915-7636

Tonya Lawrence, Academic Dean of Goodman Branch (Holmes Community College)  
[tlawrence@holmescc.edu](mailto:tlawrence@holmescc.edu) (662) 472-9174

Mrs. Laura Curry, Principal (Carroll County School District)  
[ccsd.lcurry@gmail.com](mailto:ccsd.lcurry@gmail.com) (662) 237-6840