

# 31<sup>st</sup> & Pearl

## P&T “Recusal Tactic” Diminishes Oversight

Apparently no one has stopped to recognize the fact that the P&T “recusal tactic” that we have read so much about lately only diminishes the oversight role played by university-wide college advisory councils. The tactic is one wherein members of the CoB’s College Advisory Council recuse themselves from voting on P&T dossiers at the departmental level so that they retain the option of voting at the CAC level. This is done because of the “one person, one vote” stipulation, though there is reportedly never any record presented at the CAC level proving one has not already voted at the department level. The tactic, popularized since 2003, or when the Harold Doty-Farhang Niroomand Administration of the CoB reigned supreme, is used primarily on “controversial” P&T dossiers, as one might imagine. Management professor Stephen Bushardt, now Chair of the CoB’s CAC, has employed the tactic in the recent past. Former Associate Dean Farhang Niroomand, now a member of the CAC, is poised to do so this year (2007-08).

What is it that proponents of the “recusal tactic” fail recognize about the role of the CAC in P&T recommendations? It’s simple. College advisory councils are set up so that wayward departments lack the ability to knowingly push sub-standard P&T applications through a college. Members of other departments get to act, through CAC representatives, as gatekeepers of integrity and quality in all issues P&T. By allowing CAC members to recuse themselves at the departmental level, the gatekeeping task of the CAC can be circumvented by wayward departments. Through their CAC representatives’ votes, wayward departments can have controversial P&T dossiers – dossiers that would have failed without the recusals – pass. Or, wayward departments can have close calls (or ties) at the CAC level transformed into to more significant “victories” through the recusal tactic.

If you ask the likes of Bushardt and Niroomand about the “right” of CAC members to recuse themselves at the department level, they will likely respond by saying that there is no strict prohibition of the practice in any of USM’s handbooks. If, however, you ask them why they have made, or are making, use of the tactic, their answers are likely to get a bit shiftier. There’s no good reason for doing it, other than to cast a vote on a controversial dossier at a level where that vote will carry more weight than usual. Such is the CoB we live in. It’s a real shame.