

31st & Pearl

Friends Win Benefits

The [recent story](#) about new CoB Professor of Practice Michael J. Gade highlights a disturbing trend in the CoB's hiring practices in recent years. That practice concerns the hiring of friends and associates of other relatively recent CoB hires, and we got a good glimpse of what was to come with it when, shortly after the ECO hired Akbar Marvasti, EFIB chair George Carter and former CoB dean Harold Doty pulled Marvasti's friend Ray Canterbury out of retirement to (mysteriously) join the CoB as a scholar-in-residence. Of course, Marvasti claimed to have had nothing to do with Canterbury's hiring, and he (Marvasti) screamed and yelled as much at the EFIB's now *infamous* [Black Tuesday meeting](#) in September of 2006. By then, however, the writing was on the wall, as members of the CoB had learned that Carter and Doty [planned to squeeze](#) all sorts of [publicity](#) out of having Canterbury, the former Florida State University economist, on hand for the 2006-07 academic year. That plan fell flat, however, as Canterbury [mysteriously left](#) USM two weeks into the fall 2006 semester, and was not heard from again. His absence then added to a number of [teaching load controversies](#) that would hound the Doty administration, as did the Tom Lindley-Ray Canterbury [comparison](#), until its final days in April of 2007.

Since Doty arrived as dean of the CoB (then the CBED) in July of 2003, the Marvasti-then-Canterbery scenario has, in one form or another, repeated itself a number of times. Shortly after coming to the CoB as an assistant professor of management, Jennifer Sequeira (PhD, Texas at Arlington) was able to capitalize on the CoB's human resources disaster of 2007-08 by bringing into the fold her [friend and coauthor](#) SherRhonda Gibbs. Gibbs, who published an article with Sequeira in the obscure *International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business*, came to the CoB from Inovatrics Technologies. She is also reported to be ABD from Jackson State University. Though good on *quantity*, Sequeira's research record has been relatively lacking in *quality*. And in terms of academic pedigree, Sequeira and Gibbs hold the only Tier 4 terminal degrees (counting the ABD) among MGT's full-time teaching faculty above the level of instructor. This example highlights the kinds of outcomes that the CoB's "friends win benefits" generate.

It doesn't stop there. If we go back to EFIB we encounter newly-promoted associate professor of economics Sami Dakhliya, who joined the CoB in August of 2006. Dakhliya was, to use Carter's term, "canned" by the University of Alabama after a six year tenure track ride there. It also appears as though Dakhliya's was also the first face Carter turned to when former EFIB economists Franklin Mixon rocked the EFIB with his December

2007 resignation. Almost immediately Razvan Pascalau, a graduate student at UofAL, was [brought](#) into the EFIB to replace Mixon. With Pascalau [came](#) one of the [loosest grading scales](#) the CoB has ever seen, and it came at a time when the CoB could least afford it. Another example of “friends win benefits,” another bad outcome.

From here we can go to Pascalau’s replacement. That [individual](#) is Deniz Gevrek, a new PhD (in eco) from the University of Texas. Gevrek was hired as a result of one of the CoB’s [more interesting](#) job search exercises, [led by](#) Akbar Marvasti. The EFIB’s 2007-08 job market effort, one in which multiple hires were sought, was such a disaster that upon securing Gevrek it appears that the search team quickly moved into “friends win benefits” mode. And as a result, the CoB [will be welcoming](#) Gevrek’s UT classmate Yosef Bonaparte in January of 2009. In some cases, perhaps this one is an example, it seems as though the “friends win benefits” program is simply the result of laziness on the part of CoB administrators and/or faculty. The fact that UT grad student #3 – [Gonul Sengul](#) – is scheduled for Dakhli’s seminar series (24-Oct-08) certainly does not disabuse one of that thought.

Finally, one would be remiss if *Draughn Associate Professor of Healthcare Marketing* Michael Wittmann were left out of any list of players in the “friends win benefits” program. Wittmann’s hands seem to be on a number of [political](#) hot buttons in the CoB these days, and the “fwb” program is no exception. In fact, Wittmann’s potential role in the hiring of Gade might be the most egregious example of “fwb.” Gade, who [will join](#) the CoB in January of 2009 as a Professor of Practice, currently serves as a Class III Director of Rent-a-Center, Inc. In that capacity Gade earns at least \$146,783 per year. And despite not holding any degree beyond the MBA, the CoB will pay Gade \$85,000 for some teaching duties. As such, the hiring of Gade appears to represent an instant double-dipping (at \$231,783) controversy.

If you’re new CoB dean Lance Nail, “fwb” is not going to get you where you want to go. Fortunately for Nail, he is in a position to shut it down, and immediately. Whether or not he takes care to do so or not might be seen as early as August of 2009. Doing so may be the CoB’s only chance for advancement.

31st & Pearl is a series housed at [usmnews.net](#) that features commentary on aspects of life in the CoB from a variety of columnists.