

31st & Pearl

Survival of the Meanest

"Mike [Forster] reported on a conversation he had with George Carter regarding the evolving role of the department chair. They discussed the idea of having a panel discussion on this topic . . ."

USM Council of Chairs Meeting Minutes for 6 April 2006,
http://www.usm.edu/coc/minutes/minutes_april2006.doc

What does EFIB Chair George Carter know about "the evolving role of the department chair" in academia? He's been an economics department chair at USM (1989-1997) and at USM (2005-present). Wait a minute -- the role of "department chair" in the CoB has evolved over the time frame capturing these two eras. The first era, 1989-1997, fell under Tyrone Black's leadership. Back then the CBA, given its resources, dealt in quality research and rock solid classroom instruction. The second era falls under the Harold Doty-to-Alvin Williams umbrella. In these more recent days the CoB, given its resources, seems to deal more in meting out punishments and harassing its faculty. That's evolution, though not of the usual sort.

Given the context above, the conversation between Mike Forster and George Carter seems more plausible. It's my guess that Carter spent much of the conversation showing Forster the difference between the Eastern and Western grips on the "tenure club," and how each impacts the untenured head with its own force and angle as it's brought down upon that head. Carter may have attempted to show Forster how each grip puts faculty in a different type of awkward situation professionally -- one for a number of years, and the other for an entire career.

If Forster was taking notes he may have jotted down the term "pariah" a number of times. Forster also might have heard the term "malcontents" once or twice, and was possibly instructed on the nuances of interpreting the USM Faculty Handbook's faculty governance provisions. If things went by the playbook, then Carter may have ended the conversation by telling Forster that they (the chairs) needed to "get this campus back under control."

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