

31st & Pearl

They Should Know

Not one of the CoB's former Deans has been able to successfully use the position as a stepping stone to bigger and better administrative posts. That fact includes the two most recent occupiers of the second floor Dean's suite in Greene Hall, William Gunther and Harold Doty. To the contrary, Gunther was fired in January of 2003, while Doty submitted a surprising resignation in April of 2007. Today, with the benefit of hindsight and additional information, Doty's resignation looks more like the type of "let go" scenario Gunther faced five years ago.

This track record of failure -- failure to climb the ladder of academic administration -- built by the CoB's former Deans is something this year's candidates for the position should be warned about, especially young Lance Nail from UAB. Nail appears to be about the same age as a young Duane Harold Doty was when he (Doty) arrived at USM in July of 2003 from Syracuse University. Like Doty was at that time, Nail is a department chair now. But that's where the similarities between these two end.

Nail would do well to examine what has become of Doty since stepping down as Dean in April of 2007. Doty has spent the interim teaching large sections of management principles at a Tier IV university. By all accounts, Doty's research stream has succumbed to the atrophy that academic administration leads to, not that he (Doty) was much of a research catalyst before stepping up and attempting to administer the CoB. Nail's current research foundation isn't as strong as Doty's was in 2003, so a failure on the second floor of Greene Hall might have even more disastrous consequences for Nail. Finally, Doty was able to insulate himself financially from his Deanhood failures by having EFIB Chair, George Carter, hire his wife, Susan Doty, as an EFIB economist. That little move has helped to keep the Canebrake mortgage paid.

If Nail, or any of the other finalists, is looking at the CoB as a career stepping stone, then he (or she) is taking a humongous risk. No other Dean in the CoB's history has successfully used CoB Deanship as a stepping stone to bigger and better administrative things. Could Nail, or any of the other finalists, succeed where others failed? Sure. Would I bet on it? No way. Not even close.

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