

31st & Pearl

Shoe's on the Other Foot

Harold Doty stomped into and out of the CoB Dean's suite on Tuesday the 23rd of January, outraged that someone had reproduced a portion of the presentation made by Dr. Karen Tarnoff on the 19th of January at USM. In her presentation, Dr. Tarnoff stated explicitly that it is not a good idea for one school to "buy" [read: take] another school's mission, vision, goals, standards, etc., and pass them off as its own.

Dr. Tarnoff's statement was absolutely sound advice, and her statements were accurately represented in the reproduction housed at www.usmpride.com. Dr. Tarnoff is a professional, and she handled the presentation with the utmost professionalism. Her advice about "buying" another school's accreditation documents was not unsolicited, however.

Tarnoff was responding to a question asked by Talai Osmonbekov – who, in all probability, was clueless as to the loaded nature of his question – whether or not she had a set of documents that we [USM's CoB] could "buy." It was this question that prompted Tarnoff's response: It's a bad idea to take documents from other schools and pass them off as your own.

The loaded nature of the issue comes about because Doty, Niroomand, Carter, Babin, Lewis, Becker, Duhon, and others were perfectly willing to include a document among the CoB's AACSB application that has been proven to be taken directly from a similar document at Central Missouri State University. This issue – which amounts to plagiarism in this writer's opinion – was swept under the rug before Tarnoff's visit. Now, Osmonbekov's question exposed a raw nerve.

As Tarnoff was delivering her admonition, Doty squirmed and shifted in his seat. Both he and George Carter later attempted to give rationalizations of instances in which it would be "okay" to steal others' ideas and work. Tarnoff shut that line of thought down cold.

Why was Doty so angry about this situation? Aside from the fact that he was publicly told to “go stand in the corner” by this interloper was published on the internet, there is but one reason. Tarnoff’s message didn’t suit his needs. Imagine, if you will, a situation in which Tarnoff had said that the CoB’s little plagiarism issue was, in fact, “okay,” and that using CMSU’s documents was acceptable operating procedure. Is there anyone who thinks that Doty and his team wouldn’t have trumpeted that revelation from the rooftops? It’s not difficult to imagine the smug look of validation on Doty’s face had Tarnoff told him what he wanted to hear. Fortunately for the CoB, Tarnoff did the right thing – she told the truth.

Sources say that Doty attempted to inform Tarnoff of the report at www.usmpride.com in an attempt to whip her into a frenetic anger. This strategy has worked with David Duhon and others and is a favorite tactic of Doty’s and Farhang Niroomand’s. However, this writer is betting that Tarnoff got a clear picture of the real Doty and the real CoB on her visit to Hattiesburg and that Tarnoff is capable of seeing through Doty’s ruse.

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