

Joint Venture versus the AACSB Maintenance Report **Which Story Are We To Believe?**

The latest issue of Joint Venture, the CoB's vanity public relations publication is out, and it is a doozie. While Joint Venture will no doubt be the impetus for many reports at usmpride.com, one has only to turn to the inside cover to get a glimpse of the disingenuous way that Harold Doty uses his position as Dean.

In his "Dean's Message" (presented as an appendix to this report), Doty states that, after Hurricane Katrina, "[w]e [the CoB] managed to stay the course, to continue our initiatives, and to launch and refine other programs and initiatives." So, readers of Joint Venture are being told that the CoB is on course, and that, despite the hardships caused by Katrina, the CoB is in pretty good shape. Doty goes on to tell readers that the CoB's AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation is also on course, and that, "we believe we have stayed this course well. We are confident that through continued hard work . . . we will have a successful reaffirmation visit."

We'd like to agree with Doty, but we simply cannot. The simple fact is that Doty is pumping sunshine to the business community with his calculated spin on the CoB's AACSB situation. Doty's Joint Venture statements ring false when compared to statements made in the CoB's AACSB Maintenance Report, a draft of which was circulated several weeks ago. What follows are some passages from the AACSB Maintenance Report, authored by Doty himself. Commentary is in blue font following each quotation.

Katrina's Impact on the CoB:

"There is little question that the damage resulting from Hurricane Katrina is the most significant event in the recent history of Southern Miss. This damage poses a special problem for our operations on the Mississippi coast. At this time, the business faculty have no offices, limited space and support resources, and little physical infrastructure to help rebuild the sense of a university community. This situation creates a less than desirable environment for Gulf Coast faculty at this time. The university is making efforts to improve the situation, but the rebuilding process is slow.

"The rebuilding of south Mississippi, and especially the Mississippi gulf coast has created tremendous uncertainty on the coast. It is clear that there is going to be explosive economic expansion on the coast and significant expansion across south Mississippi. At this time, however, there simply are no accurate or even reliable projections about the short term and long term effects on higher education. We are planning to move forward and believe our enrollment numbers will recover from the current downturn."

This does not sound like the CoB is on course. To the contrary, this passage relates the partial truth regarding the Coast campus. Notice, however, that Doty interjects a statement to let the AACSB team know just how bad Katrina hurt the CoB. We will revisit Doty's playing of the Katrina Card at the conclusion of this report.

On Competitive Challenges:

"Unfortunately a second major competitive issue is increased development activity across the board. Particularly in the aftermath of Katrina the sources of philanthropic funding in Mississippi have been asked to respond to a larger than normal needs pool. As a consequence, while overall giving is up, the market share for higher education is somewhat decreased."

So, donations to and funding of higher education and especially the CoB have decreased relative to other areas, and we are feeling the pinch. Yet another way the CoB is not on course.

On Strategic Planning:

"We have also learned, particularly after dealing with hurricane Katrina last year, that unpredictable external events must be responded to even if they are not included in the strategic plan."

This is a mystifying statement, especially coming from Doty, a self-professed strategy expert. Of course unforeseen events may occur, and, of course, they must be dealt with. This is just a little reminder from Doty to the AACSB team that Katrina really messed up the CoB's activities.

On Enrollment at USM:

"In the short run, the university is likely to see a decrease in enrollment as a result of Katrina. This pattern is likely to affect the business school more quickly than other areas. We expect a significant decrease in the number of community college transfers in the upcoming academic year which may reduce enrollment in the College of Business."

Not only are the CoB's state and philanthropic funding down, but tuition revenue is down as well. Since we expect "a significant decrease" in enrollment, can anyone seriously state that the CoB is on course?

On SACs Probation:

"The initial visit necessary to remove USM from probation scheduled in September 2006 [sic] was canceled by SACS due to Katrina."

SACS removed USM from probationary status in early 2006. This seems like another opportunity for Doty to work in a Katrina reference.

On Student Recruiting:

“Some progress was made on this implementation item but our efforts were slowed by the complete disruption to south Mississippi resulting from Katrina. Our primary market base was radically altered, and business conditions changed in unexpected ways.”

With homes and businesses destroyed, it is little wonder that student recruitment was affected. Again, as the ways Katrina damaged our AACSB efforts mount, can one really say that the CoB is on course?

On the CoB's Progress:

“We believe our decision to retain our pre Katrina strategy probably encouraged us to make more progress than we would have made had we scaled back our ambitions after the storm. Thus, while we acknowledge that we did not accomplish every [missing word here: goal?] we identified for the year, we believe we made significant strides to improve the College of Business in spite of trying circumstances.”

So, Doty admits to the AACSB team that the CoB's plans were drastically altered, so much so that the CoB failed to meet its To-Do list for the 2005-06 school year.

Analysis and Comparisons

In the latest issue of Joint Venture, Harold Doty tells the business community that (1) the CoB is on course after Katrina and (2) AACSB reaffirmation will be successful.

However in the AACSB Maintenance Report draft, circulated via email in the CoB, Doty identifies no fewer than nine ways in which the CoB has been seriously impacted by Katrina:

1. Destruction of USM's Coast campus
2. Economic uncertainty
3. Reduced philanthropic giving to the CoB
4. Possible reduced funding of higher education
5. Disruption of the CoB's strategic planning process
6. Possible reduction of student enrollment
7. Delay of USM's removal from SACS probation
8. Roadblocks to student recruitment, and
9. The CoB's failure to achieve 2005-06 goals

Doty must think these are important enough to devote a significant portion of the AACSB report to describing the effect of Katrina on the CoB; if Doty thinks these are insignificant issues, then why include them in the AACSB report at all?

The answer is a simple one. Doty is playing the Katrina Card, hoping that some of the goodwill most Americans feel for Katrina victims will rub off on the CoB's reaffirmation effort and carry the day not only for the CoB, but also for Doty's career as a dean at any AACSB school – having an AACSB probation on his vita would make Doty a pariah to dean search committees everywhere. Doty's obviousness is almost as appalling as his mendacity, but neither will come as a surprise to CoB faculty.

Indeed, this focus on Katrina tends to contradict Doty's Joint Venture statement that “[w]e [the CoB] managed to stay the course, to continue our initiatives, and to launch and refine other programs and initiatives.” In fact, this statement is blatantly misleading, given that Doty tells the AACSB team that “while we acknowledge that we did not accomplish every [missing word here: goal?] we identified for the year, we believe we made significant strides to improve the College of Business in spite of trying circumstances.”



Dr. Harold Doty, DEAN OF COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

DEAN'S MESSAGE

JOINT VENTURE

When Hurricane Katrina tore through south Mississippi last year, the courage and dedication of our faculty and staff prevented this university and this college from being blown off course. Through their efforts we managed to deliver a full semester of education both in Hattiesburg and on the Gulf Coast. Although we had to reduce the number of sections of some classes, we did not cancel any classes. We managed to offer at least one class in each of our scheduled offerings.

We did that when the College of Business had five faculty and staff members whose homes were completely destroyed. We did that when every faculty and staff member had damage to their homes and went without power and water for days, and in many cases, weeks. Their determination is simply amazing, and my personal thanks go to each member of our faculty and staff.

We managed to stay the course, to continue our initiatives, and to launch and refine other programs and initiatives. In spite of Katrina, we participated fully in the university's efforts for SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) reaffirmation and saw that goal achieved. We increased the number of classrooms with teaching technology and put our pharmaceutical sales program before the Institution of Higher Learning for approval. Now I would like to focus on what lies ahead.

In many ways this may be the most exciting year the college has ever had. I want to share with you three areas of growth.

First, our goal for a new building is moving forward. Representatives from the state Bureau of Buildings have stated that a proposal for the building in a preplanning stage will be put before the legislature this year. Our alumni and friends in the business community have worked diligently to hold us on this course.

Second, after 15 months of work, the College of Business will have a complete, up-to-date, electronic alumni database. Although they didn't know it at the time, when our Business Advisory Council (BAC) members provided total funding for this project, they set the pace for the entire university community. The USM Foundation is presently assisting other colleges at Southern Miss to develop alumni databases in the future using this same system.

Third, our AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation visit is scheduled for February. In 2003, a massive restructuring of the standards for AACSB accreditation occurred. For the last three years, the college has focused on maintaining our overall high quality of education and making improvements where needed to meet the high standards for AACSB accreditation. During times of uncertain budgets, budget reductions, enrollment fluctuations and the comings and goings of valued faculty members, this has been a strenuous task. But we believe we have stayed this course as well. We are confident that through continued hard work and with the guidance from our peer institutions, we will have a successful reaffirmation visit.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to express the tremendous gratitude I feel for our business community. They help us financially by sponsoring events such as the Ross Perot Distinguished Entrepreneur Lecture and by providing scholarships for our students and support for faculty endeavors. They help us educationally by identifying deficiencies in our curriculum and by providing internships for our students.

The mission of the College of Business is to develop careers for our students, and the single most important thing our business community does is hire our students. No business school in America enjoys greater support from its business community than does Southern Miss. Thank you for that support, for helping us stay the course and for encouraging us in our progress on "The Road to 100."

Sincerely,

D. Harold Doty
Dean, College of Business