

Abuse of Staff?

A Look Back at CoB History on the Matter

The recent advice to CoB dean Lance Nail entitled [Wrong Message, Wrong Mode, Wrong Moment, Wrong Minister](#) regarding the so-called Sonia Gaines-Littles episode alludes to the possibility that the undercurrent of animus towards CoB faculty in Gaines-Littles' e-mail stems from some harm done by past faculty abuse(s) of CoB staff. Assuming for the moment that such harm is real, a look back at CoB history, and on a staffer-by-staffer basis, reveals that the abuses almost always stem from CoB administration sources.

1. Wanda Crain – the story of Crain, the former executive assistant in the School of Accounting, is well-known. Constantly hounded by former CoB associate dean Farhang Niroomand and former SAIS director Roderick Posey, Crain was denied lunch and bathroom breaks, despite the fact that these are mandated by federal employment law. Crain's story above was well-known among faculty ranks at the time, as were the tirades that she often suffered at the sharp tongue of Niroomand.

2. Denise Crozier – Crozier, the former administrative assistant in tourism management (TM), worked for former TM chair Cherylynn Becker. As told on the pages of USMNEWS.net on numerous occasions, Becker verbally assaulted Crozier in the hallways of Joseph Greene Hall, using profanity and other hurtful phrases. These were aimed for no good reason at Crozier, who would later file a complaint with USM officials. A relatively large number of witnesses described the scene recounted above as a volatile, unpredictable one. CoB administrators like former dean Harold Doty, and Doty's associate dean Farhang Niroomand, reserved any concern they would express (after the verbal explosion) for Becker.

3. Melia Hartsfield – the CoB former Alternative Learning Coordinator, Hartsfield, worked out of the CoB's dean's suite. Based on Hartsfield's experiences, at least as far as reports have it (e.g., Patty Munn's federal deposition), that is a curse, not a blessing. Hartsfield's tenure in the CoB ended on a protracted "leave of absence," which ended when she surfaced in another administrative position across the USM-Hattiesburg campus.

4. Lola Ingram – the fact that, with CoB dean Lance Nail's reorganization of the CoB that splits economics and finance, economics secretary Lola Ingram will be going with finance (to FINRELS) and not with economics (to BEDS) says it all. After years of being at the beck-and-call of EFIB chair George Carter and former CoB associate dean Farhang Niroomand, primarily in the service (by these two proxies) of economics professor Edward Nissan, Ingram has decided "enough is enough." Having suffered verbal lashings from Nissan on more than some occasions, Ingram will no longer be responsible for preparing Nissan's manuscripts, *when, where, and how* he wants them.

5. Sheila Marler – shortly after departing the CoB dean's office during the Harold Doty administration (2003-07), Marler's story of verbal abuse at the tongue of Niroomand spread like wild fire. What Crain, Ingram, and perhaps Crozier dealt with on an occasional basis, Marler lived with daily. As one source put it, the line of those abused by Niroomand is a long one, and Marler may be at the head of it.

CoB dean's office staffers often described the office environment during the Doty administration (2003-07) as that expected to surround a group of sailors on shore leave. Four-letter words were hurled around like footballs on a Saturday afternoon in the fall, and decorum was completely lacking in all other areas. The staff in USM's CoB has always been underpaid. This is especially so given that they have been made to suffer the type of systematic abuse from administrators that has so characterized the CoB since 2003, if not before.