

Always at the Scene

**What did George Carter Know about Laurie Babin's work on the Academic Integrity Policy,
and when did he Know it?**

Investigators at USMPRIDE.COM have obtained an interesting document that sheds new light on the CoB's "copy" of the Whitman School of Management's (Syracuse University) Academic Integrity Policy. A number of reports have been posted to this website in recent days showing that the CoB's Academic Integrity Policy was copied, the better part of word-for-word, from a document available on Syracuse University's website. CoB Dean Harold Doty, who initiated CBED efforts to create an academic honor code, was employed as a Chair in Syracuse's Whitman School of Management prior to coming to USM in the summer of 2003.¹

The lengthy document inserted below is a memo written by marketing professor Laurie Babin on 11 February 2004. At the time Babin was serving as Chair of the CBED's new Academic Conduct Committee. Babin's memo was addressed to George Carter, the CBED's Accreditation Committee Chair. Other members of the CBED's new Academic Committee were also copied by Babin. Our investigators have highlighted various parts of Babin's 2004 memo in order to facilitate comments appearing below the memo.

MEMORANDUM

To: George Carter, Chair, Accreditation Committee

Copy: Academic Conduct Committee

From: Laurie Babin, Chair, Academic Conduct Committee

Subj: Input to 2003-2004 Accreditation Maintenance Report

Date: February 11, 2004

The purpose of this report is to provide input to the College of Business and Economic Development's (CBED) Accreditation Committee for the 2003-2004

¹ When Doty arrived at USM in 2003, USM's College of Business (CoB) was known as the College of Business and Economic Development (CBED).

Accreditation Maintenance Report regarding the background and purpose, the activities performed do date, and the goals of the CBED's Academic Conduct Committee.

Background and Purpose of the Committee

The Academic Conduct Committee (ACC) was created after the revised committee structure of the CBED was approved at the August, 2003, college-wide faculty meeting. Dean Doty appointed the following members to serve on this committee:

- Dr. Laurie Babin, Chair

- Dr. Jon Carr

- Dr. Scott Magruder

- Mr. Frank Whitesell

The purpose of the committee was to ensure that the college is operating in accordance with AACSB International Accreditation standards with respect to ethical behavior. While that was one driving force behind the creation of this committee, others were to foster academic integrity within our college and to initiate a process of continuous improvement with regard to academic integrity.

Activities Performed to Date

The Academic Conduct Committee has met several times since it's conception to discuss the CBED's status regarding AACSB International Accreditation standards and actions we can take to establish a College-level academic integrity policy for the CBED. In general, our approach was to examine relevant University-related policies and procedures with respect to academic misconduct and to examine policies in place at other universities (ie, Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy for the School of Management) to serve as a guide for any policy or procedure that we will propose for faculty approval for the CBED. Finally, we consulted USM's Dean of Students, Dr. Eddie Holloway, and the University's attorney, Mr. Lee Gore, to help us resolve the issues and concerns we had.

The points below represent some of the critical issues/questions that can potentially affect any academic integrity policy within the University in general, and the CBED in particular, and what we have learned with respect to these issues/questions.

1. Is the CBED at the University of Southern Mississippi in accordance with AACSB International Accreditation with respect to ethical behavior?

Section I. E. on Eligibility Procedures for AACSB International Accreditation states:

The institution or the business programs of the institution must establish expectations for ethical behavior by administrators, faculty, and students.

The CBED satisfies this requirement because the institution (i.e, Southern Miss) has established expectations and a procedure for handling violations of these expectations as outlined in the Student Handbook.

2. What is the University of Southern Mississippi's policy regarding academic dishonesty?

A summary of the University's policy from the Student Handbook is provided. Specific sections that state the University's position with respect to academic misconduct or ethical behavior include:

- a. Article IV. Judicial Article, Sections 1-12 of the SGA Constitution (pp. 24-29);
- b. The Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Actions, Procedures for Hearings Before the Student Judicial Council or Dean of Students, & Prohibited Conduct (pp. 75-91).

In particular, several points are key to any academic misconduct policy:

"When cheating is discovered, the faculty member may give the student an F on the work involved or in the course. If further disciplinary action is deemed appropriate, the student should be reported to the dean of students" (p. 75).

"In addition to being a violation of academic dishonesty, cheating violates the code of student conduct and may be grounds for probation, suspension, or expulsion, or all three" (p. 75).

Under the section titled, "Prohibited Conduct," Academic Dishonesty is defined as "academic cheating or plagiarism" (p.88). Additionally, the Handbook defines "plagiarism" on p. 75, but there is no description of other types of cheating in the Student Handbook.

Even if an alleged incident is forwarded to the Dean of Students and the Student Judicial System finds for the student, the actions of the faculty member (i.e., giving an F) are unaffected. The student has the right to and must appeal the grade through the University's established grade appeal process.

Currently, the Dean of Students is attempting to establish an honor code at the University level, which is similar to what our Dean has tasked us to establish, but as of this date, it has not been approved.

3. Does any other college within this university have its own academic conduct policy or judicial system?

Currently, no college at the University of Southern Mississippi has such a college level system.

However, the University of Southern Mississippi-Gulf Coast (USM-GC) Catalog does state that academic dishonesty cases will be handled by the USM-GC Academic Dean. However, the USM-GC Academic Integrity Committee in their report entitled, “Dealing with Academic Dishonesty at the University of Southern Mississippi-Gulf Coast: Report of Anti-Plagiarism Technology,” state “this does not match the USM Student Handbook” (p. 7). They further reported that, “This issue needs to be resolved. As long as this disparity between the two manuals is allowed to exist, it means that no student can be suspended or expelled from USM-GC no matter how egregious or repetitive the misconduct”(p. 7). In general, the USM-GC Academic Integrity Committee concludes that USM-GC does not have the authority to adjudicate academic dishonesty cases because they fall under the purview of the USM Student Handbook.

The above conclusion in the USM-GC report and our own reservations regarding whether or not we could, as a college, establish our own academic conduct policy and procedures led us to examine the next question.

4. Can an individual college at the University of Southern Mississippi establish an academic conduct policy and a judicial system to handle incidents in the college?

We posed this question to Dr. Eddie Holloway, Dean of Students, and Mr. Lee Gore, University Attorney. The basic question we needed answered was, “Does the Dean of the CBED have authority to impose sanctions, such as probation, suspension, and/or expulsion?” The answer to the question is that academic deans do not and would not have the authority to expel or suspend a student from the entire university, but they could impose these types of sanctions at the college level. This does not only apply to students majoring in the CBED, but also to any students taking courses in the CBED. Thus, the Dean of the CBED could prohibit students from enrolling in CBED courses and/or from enrolling in the college as their major.

Conclusions regarding the above issues/questions:

1. The University of Southern Mississippi has a policy and procedure in place with respect to academic misconduct or ethical behavior, and all members of the University community must use this procedure to handle academic dishonesty incidents.
2. Even though there is a policy and procedure in place, the CBED can institute its own integrity code, policy, and procedure but must still work within that of the University. Matters that appear to warrant more serious sanctions, such as probation, expulsion, or expulsion from the University must be dealt with through the University’s procedure.

Goals and Future Activities for the Committee

In light of the above information, there is room for improvement within the CBED, and this section enumerates the goals and activities that are planned for the ACC over the next year.

Goal #1: Develop a rough draft of an honor code and procedure that can be implemented in the 2004-2005 academic year.

Completion target: February 27, 2004

Goal #2: Conduct research with faculty, staff, and students to gain insight into the extent of dishonorable academic behavior, potential solutions, and each parties' attitudes toward implementing an academic honor code and procedure at the college level similar to the one developed in the rough draft. This research will consist of several focus groups at the Hattiesburg and Gulf Park campuses.

Completion target: March 31, 2004

Goal #3: Develop a CBED Integrity Honor Code Policy and Procedure. Prior to presenting it to the faculty for a vote, get feedback from Dean Doty, Dr. Eddie Holloway (Dean of Students), and Mr. Lee Gore (University Attorney).

Completion target: April 16, 2004

Goal #4: Faculty votes on the CBED Integrity Honor Code Policy and Procedure. Completion target: Spring faculty meeting, 2004

Goal #5: Implement a CBED Integrity Honor Code Policy and Procedure during the 2004-2005 academic year.

Comments on the Memo:

We selected a number of potentially significant passages in the memo above for commentary. These are dealt with below (numerically) in the order in which they appear above.

1. First, Babin stipulates in the memo to being the chair of the CBED's Academic Conduct Committee – the CBED committee tasked with developing a new Academic Integrity Policy for the CBED.
2. Here, Babin states up front that the main purpose of the Committee is to set up a system that indicates continuous improvement in the area of academic conduct that is in accordance with AACSB guidelines. USMPRIDE.COM editor Marc DePree has pointed out on numerous

occasions that USM's system for dealing with academic dishonesty are woefully inadequate, by AACSB and other standards.

3. The next passage is highlighted in red. In it, Babin indicates to Carter that the CBED's Academic Conduct Committee's approach, under her leadership, to develop a College-level academic integrity policy for the CBED was to examine academic integrity policies at other universities. Babin's actual language is quite interesting, as shown again below:

“. . . our approach was to . . . examine policies in place at other universities (ie, Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy for the School of Management) to serve as a guide for any policy or procedure that we will propose for faculty approval for the CBED.”

The phrases from Babin's memo underlined in red above are significant. They seem to indicate that Babin planned to go no further than examination The Whitman School's policy (Syracuse University). According to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, “ie” or “i.e.” is the abbreviation for the latin phrase *id est*, which translates to “that is.” It also commonly translates to “that is to say” (legal-explanations.com). Thus, Babin's quote could be re-written:

“. . . our approach was to . . . examine policies at other Universities (that is to say, Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy for the School of Management) to serve as a guide for any policy or procedure that we will propose . . .”

With Babin's memo Carter knew that the CBED would “guide” its Academic Integrity Policy using Syracuse's example. This is *what* Carter knew. *When* did Carter know it? In February of 2004, or more than three years ago.²

4. The final highlighted passage supports discussion in a recent report available at USMPRIDE.COM that indicated that CBED Dean Doty wanted to use the CBED's policy as a model for a new University-wide academic honor code for USM. USM was lagging in its efforts, begun before the CBED's adoption of the Whitman School's academic integrity

² Readers should keep in mind that at the time (Feb-04) Carter was still widely recognized as the CBED's “Ethicist-in Residence,” a position of “authority” Carter maintained until the fall of 2006, when a number of ethics-related controversies involving Carter were brought to USMPRIDE.COM's attention.

policy, to develop an honor code. So, the faster Babin produced a result, the greater the likelihood that Doty could present President Thames with an honor code for the whole institution.

Babin's Feb-04 memo to Carter (above) adds more suspicion to what is an already troublesome episode in USM's College of Business. The AACSB Peer Review departed less than one month ago, and things seem to be sliding further rather than turning around. Given the thoughts concerning the forthcoming (?) AACSB peer review report that have appeared in the *Speculation Station* over the past few days, the CoB's future appears grim.