

UT-Tyler President Struggling to Contain Chaos

HATTIESBURG – Judging by his letter to the University of Texas – Tyler community dated 15-Feb-2011, UT-Tyler president Rod Mabry is struggling to contain the chaos being created on the campus by UT-Tyler business school dean, Harold Doty. Doty, the former CoB dean at USM (2003-07), was hired in 2009 by UT-Tyler provost, Peter Fos, the former College Health Dean at USM. Former USM vice president for finance, Gregg Lassen, is also part of this situation that is going viral now, as is former CoB management chairman/professor Stephen Bushardt, who is now the chairman of UT-Tyler’s management department.



Lassen

Fos

Doty

Bushardt

Recent reports here at USMNEWS.net have provided copies of letters penned in late Jan-2011, detailing many misdeeds that Doty is being accused of in his capacity as b-school dean by members of the Tyler community. Those activities are also alleged to be related to the sudden 15-Feb-2011 departure of UT-Tyler vice president for business affairs, Gregg Lassen, and the impending departure of Fos. After almost two weeks, the UT-Tyler president, Rod Mabry, decided to address campus and community concerns regarding this chaos via his three-page letter, which was recently sent to USMNEWS.net and appears in the space below this report. The tone of Mabry’s letter is one of a president who seems to be struggling to address and contain the situation at hand. According to sources, the story about Fos’ impending departure for New Orleans was concocted to allow Fos to save face, while the worse-than-cryptic remarks about Lassen’s departure speak quite clearly for themselves. With Mabry alling these latest weeks “uncertain times,” some in the UT-Tyler community are wondering now whether he will be able to navigate the situation involving Doty in a way that is beneficial to the university.

Again, for a look at Mabry’s letter, see the insert below. As always, stay tuned to USMNEWS.net for breaking news reports on this situation.



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty and Staff
FROM: Rod Mabry
DATE: February 15, 2011
SUBJECT: **Items of Interest**

I plan to write you more often during these uncertain times, and I know you've been waiting to hear from me. As you read through this message, you can see the level of uncertainty and why I needed to wait. The following are items of interest:

1. **Provost Fos.** It is true that our **EVP for Academic Affairs and Provost**, Dr. Peter Fos, will likely be leaving in the future. These economic times can create strange sequences of events. What has happened is that his wife, Lori, who currently directs a program at TJC, received a very special offer of a position in New Orleans—their hometown—one that would boost her career and one she just could not turn down. Everyone knows, as I have known from the beginning that Pete and Lori would like to return someday to Louisiana, specifically New Orleans, to live and retire. This would be a case of Pete following Lori.

Until Provost Fos goes, however, he is the provost and—given internet communications and airplanes—that could be for a substantial period of time.

2. **Enjoy your university; it's a wonderful one.** I know you are proud of our students in all that they do. I also know that you make the difference—that faculty and staff help make student successes happen. This year, some student achievements include significant Model UN success, our debaters setting a national record for reaching 71 wins in a single season, and men's soccer losing in the regional NCAA tournament to national powerhouse Trinity only in a shots-on-goal tiebreaker after two overtimes. We're proud of women's soccer success and our men's and women's tennis prowess and trips to NCAA regionals . . . both men's and women's golf teams going to the national tournament and placing highly . . . sending cross country runners to nationals . . . enjoying unbelievable basketball excitement by both our men's and women's teams (games won at the buzzer like last week's are too hard on me) . . . seeing baseball at 3 and 0 after the first weekend and with a new coach (Go Coach Wy) . . . watching softball Patriots about to start up with an 11th preseason ranking . . . awards for our student newspaper

. . . and wins for our engineers over A&M and Austin for their concrete canoes. And much more. I apologize for leaving your favorite out. How could you not like what is happening here?

Thank you for all the hard work you do to prepare our students to be the best. I want you to revel in that and enjoy *your* successes with them. I enjoy telling legislators that our students are among the best in the State and that our graduates perform better on state exams, are more likely to get jobs or go to graduate school—even our teachers are more likely to stay on the job and still be teaching at the six-year mark—than graduates from almost all other Texas universities.

This truly is a wonderful university.

3. **Budgets.** Budget authorities are sharpening their pencils and paring their budgets by 4%. I'm sorry that has to be done, but it is much less than might have been the case had you not worked last year to store up a good chunk of what we need to give back. The legislature's *proposed* percentage reductions for UT Tyler in operating funds for the next biennium (biennium to biennium and excluding funds for debt service) are 21% in the House and 19% in the Senate. Those numbers represent the worst case scenario. Everyone I've talked to in Austin, legislators and System people, believe this picture will improve. Plus, remember that we get only half of our funding from the State, so these cuts amount to a cut of around 9.5% to 10.5% of our *total* operating budget—not as bad as it first sounds.

Thank you for your positive attitude and making the very best of this situation—and for taking on extra work. As my mother used to say, mostly when I was in trouble, “This too shall pass.”

Most importantly, I thank you for taking this opportunity to become more efficient, to prioritize and to consolidate functionally related work tasks.

4. **Changes in Administration.** We are in the midst of administrative change. EVP Lassen and VP Horne will no longer be here. The close timing of these two departures, and the possible departure of our provost, is really just coincidence and a little bad luck for us. However, I assure you I will be here and we will be just fine. Here are our short-term plans.

The departure of our **EVP for business affairs** has a bright side. It gives the “third floor” an opportunity to do more with less, too, and contribute to the pot by capturing available salary savings. We have put on indefinite hold the search for a new VP for business. The vice presidents reporting to him will again report to me—VP Whatley for Accountability and IT, and VP Patterson for Auxiliary Operations and Athletics. I will step up to take on certain functions of the chief business officer (using my background in business and finance) and work a little harder—like everyone else—in order to make this plan succeed.

Ms. Sheryl Dennis, already handling our budget and financial services, will consolidate her financial role as Acting Chief Financial Officer. Her duties will expand to include IT Security and working with her own team and VP Whatley on the all-important implementation of the financial side of PeopleSoft.

Lt. Col. Jesse Acosta, already handling several non-financial campus administrative functions, will add to those and become Acting Chief Administrative Officer. His duties will expand to include our Enrollment Management, Marketing and Customer Service group.

Vice President Sherri Whatley will add student affairs. Although not immediately apparent, there is a personal fit here. Dr. Whatley, originally a faculty member in the department of computer science, is a strong advocate for students and will bring another perspective to student life.

Our **VP for research and federal relations** will take a position in Georgia beginning March 1st. Her position will be frozen as will another position in the Office of Sponsored Research that will be vacated, adding more salary savings to the funds we will give back. Grant accounting and other core sponsored research services will be maintained. Although details are not complete, we expect a valued faculty member to step in as director of OSR to keep core services going at a high level. You'll hear more on this shortly. In the interim, the federal relations part of this position will be picked up by Laura Jackson, special assistant to the president for external affairs.

These realignments of work and reporting arrangements will be effective Monday, February 21, and are the best options given current information. We will reassess our situation in July after our budget is known.

Again, thank you for your patience and your support as we work together to offer UT Tyler students the best possible value in a high quality education at an affordable price.