

Breaking News

Sawyer Does the (Once) Unthinkable

HATTIESBURG – A significant buzz is being generated around Joseph Greene Hall, and via an e-mail chain, regarding the latest news about the 2007-08 P&T Jailbreak Train (in USM's College of Business). According to information that has reached reporters at USMNEWS.NET, one of the three "outside reviewers" letters written on behalf of Akbar Marvasti's application for promotion to full professor of economics comes from former EFIB economist Charles Sawyer, who is now with TCU. According to reports, Sawyer not only worked with Marvasti during the 2006-07 academic year -- Marvasti's first in the CoB -- he (Sawyer) chaired the search committee that hired Marvasti (from Pomona College) in the spring of 2006. Thus, there is no *real* "outside" in "outside reviewer" when it comes to having Sawyer make a written case for Marvasti's promotion application.

One source tells USMNEWS.NET that Sawyer, an individual who often built himself up as a gatekeeper of propriety while in the CoB, makes no attempt in the letter to let readers know about his relationship to Marvasti. This point is important because the University Advisory Council, the USM Provost, and the USM President will all rely on Sawyer's opinion as one from a disinterested third party. Of course, that will not be the case when these three groups/individuals sit down with Marvasti's promotion dossier and review Sawyer's letter. As one source stated, by not mentioning all of the facts about his relationship with Marvasti, Sawyer appears to intend to deceive USM officials, who are not privy to such information. In doing so, Sawyer's letter seems to be an attempt to circumvent the "checks and balances" of having *real* outside reviewers examine local dossiers.



Charles Sawyer

Part of this story also involves the opinion of some sources that Sawyer "overstates" Marvasti's research credentials. At one point Sawyer reportedly asks the reader (rhetorically) whether Marvasti's research is being read by others. Sawyer then answers his own question by indicating that a *Social Sciences Citation Index* indicates that it is being read and cited, although Sawyer doesn't bother to report any numbers (findings) from *SSCI* in his letter. Our own examination of Marvasti's cites (since 1994) in *SSCI* reveals just 10 citations to Marvasti's work (excluding self-citations). This is an

important note given that Marvasti has been in academia for about 23 years and given that Sawyer failed to provide the information himself.

The controversies surrounding the 2007-08 P&T Jailbreak Train are heating up. Expect more from this particular story as it develops.