

Breaking News

CoB's LaFleur Wants "Coast Country Club"

LONG BEACH – USM Provost candidate, Donald Bobbitt, got what must have seemed to him to be an *unloaded* question from CoB marketing professor, Beth LaFleur, during the 6-Feb-08 Open Session at USMGC. LaFleur pointed out that USM wants to be thought of as "one University" when it comes to the two campuses in Hattiesburg and Long Beach. However, LaFleur informed Bobbitt that she was of the opinion that the "one University" theme fails in several areas. As an example, she offered up what sources say was a "softball" by explaining to Bobbitt the senseless need by USM to have a uniform final exam schedule for both campuses.

To LaFleur's "softball" example, Bobbitt, the Dean of Arts & Sciences at the University of Arkansas, replied that he could not think of any compelling reason why USM would mandate a uniform final exam schedule for two campuses that are 75 miles apart. Thus, Bobbitt and LaFleur seemed to be of one mind when it comes to uniform final exam schedules for Hattiesburg and the Coast.

USMNEWS.NET sources indicate, however, that LaFleur's question-scenario exercise *was* loaded. She prefaced her question/opinion by explaining to Bobbitt how the student body in Long Beach is so much different than the Hattiesburg student body. This is a drum that LaFleur, and other CoB Coast faculty such as Kenneth Zantow, who was also in attendance at Bobbitt's session, beat in every venue wherein they have the opportunity to do so. In recent days, LaFleur has even suggested that the CoB's faculty handbook, *Enhancing Faculty Productivity*, should reflect the differences that exist between the Coast and Hattiesburg.

After about five years getting used to LaFleur, sources point out that her speeches about differences in the two student populations seems to be camouflage for the fact that the *real* difference between CoB-Hattiesburg and CoB-Long Beach relates instead to the two *faculty* populations. Consider Coast faculty such as Francis Daniel, an assistant professor of management who has held a full-time position in CoB-LB for about 10 years, yet he has heretofore not submitted a dossier for tenure, even though his position is not listed as "adjunct" or "visiting." Consider Zantow, who failed his 3rd Year Review just a few years ago, yet was given an unheard of "4th Year Review" by his long-time friend, former CoB Dean Harold Doty. Consider Daniel Michael, who, like Zantow, recently failed his 3rd Year Review in management, yet was denied a "4th Year Review" by Doty, even though Hurricane Katrina had significantly affected his progress, unlike with Zantow's case, which preceded Katrina. According to sources, Michael was passed over simply because the existing Coast faculty do not like him personally as much as Zantow or others. Consider Fujun Lai, the assistant professor of MIS who has a penchant for informing students who schedule traditional, in-person classes with him that their classes will be online instead. Consider Weihua Shi, Lai's wife and visiting assistant professor of economics/finance, who EFIB Chairman George Carter has referred to as a "permanent"

visitor, conferring upon Shi a Daniel-like royal status that appears to be superior to tenure-track, or at least the Michael-style tenure track.

Of course, stories like these (e.g., Steven Jackson, etc.) are seemingly endless, each one depicting what is often referred to as a "country club" mentality held by faculty in the CoB's Gulf Coast division. Based on what CoB faculty have seen over the years, the *real* difference between the two campuses perhaps lies with the faculty, *not* the students.