

## George Carter & Another Bad Decision – Minitab Statistical Software

A document obtained from a CoB Assessment Committee member by usmpride researchers indicates that one “Perceived Problem” in the CoB’s assessment is that CoB students have “Poor Statistical Skills.” The “Corrective Action” to be taken is that the CoB will “Use Minitab For All Statistics Classes.”

According to our source, the “Data Source” for this “Perceived Problem” is George Carter, [illegitimate] EFIB chair, self-proclaimed ethicist and statistics expert. Upon what is the decision to use Minitab based? Apparently (and sadly), the answer is Carter’s *professional judgment*.

Professional judgment is a tricky matter. To have professional judgment, one must (1) be a professional and (2) make a judgment. After the *coup d’etat* engineered by Carter that led to his recent power grab, to consider him professional in a general sense is out of the question. What are Carter’s professional accomplishments that result in him being branded an expert in statistics? That’s a good question.

Based on other reports at usmpride, Carter’s area of doctoral-level expertise is economics, but he has an undergraduate-level expertise in mathematics. Since statistics is a subset of mathematics, we could assume that Carter possesses some undergraduate level of statistics knowledge, plus whatever nebulous statistics courses he may have taken in his doctoral program. Carter has taught statistics, along with economics and ethics, at USM. Does this qualify Carter as a professional statistician? Hardly.

Contrast Carter’s qualifications to those of, say, an assistant professor of statistics at the University of Mississippi. That unnamed assistant professor has a doctorate in mathematical statistics. He was trained to teach and research in the field of statistics. His publications deal with teaching statistics and solving pure statistical problems. Could he do Carter’s job (teaching statistics at USM)? Surely. Could Carter do his job (teaching and researching statistics at UM)? Hardly. Carter’s so-called expertise is based on a local comparison, not a global (or even statewide) comparison, and, contrary to Carter’s ubiquitous and ridiculous assertion, not everyone with a Ph.D. is qualified to teach statistics. At most places, to call Carter an expert in statistics would be like putting an elevator in an outhouse – the two things just don’t go together.

At USM, however, Carter is the basis for changes to the CoB's statistics courses. His solution: Use Minitab. Some questions arise immediately.

1. Is Minitab widely used in South Mississippi?
2. Is using Minitab really a change in the USM CoB delivery?

To answer #1, we Google Minitab and discover that Minitab claims to be used by companies worldwide. However, there is no evidence that Minitab is in use anywhere in South Mississippi other than at USM. At almost all businesses in South Mississippi, however, Microsoft Excel is installed on each and every desktop and laptop computer. Excel contains powerful features that allow for statistical analysis, including z-tests, t-tests, summary statistics, ANOVA, and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with multiple x-variables. In short, Excel will do almost everything Minitab will do, and Excel will be available to USM's students at their job site. Minitab may be marginally superior, but its price tag, nearly \$1,000/year for a professional license, makes it cost prohibitive for many businesses. Students who go on to graduate programs will most likely use a much superior package, such as S-plus, SAS, or Stata. Why teach students to use a software package that they'll never see again? There's no good reason.

The answer to #2 is far more intriguing. For the past decade, USM's CoB has used Minitab to teach statistics. How, then, can "Use Minitab For All Statistics Classes" be considered a "Corrective Action"? It cannot! In fact, many would consider Minitab to be part of the problem, not part of the solution. At USM's CoB, what's Old is New again. Carter has been recycled into his chair role, and now his grand plan for revitalizing the CoB's statistics courses is to use the same old statistics software package that has been used for 10 years or more. Why? The most probable solution is that Carter, the "Old Dog" who does teach statistics in the CoB, simply doesn't want to learn a "New Trick", even if it means shortchanging the students at USM.