CoB Flashback: September 2006

Join us as we flash back to September 2006, when former CoB dean Harold Doty was facing yet another crucial decision, this time regarding the CoB's email server.

Those new to USM's CoB might not know it, but the CBA/CBED/CoB was the first college at USM to have its own email server and system, separate and distinct from the USM system. The CoB's email server and system were purchased and installed under former CBA dean William Gunther. Gunther brought the CoB into the 21st Century with style but failed to properly fund upgrades that would have helped the system remain viable.

The neglect continued under Harold Doty. The email server routinely "went down" at inopportune times and, in September 2006, the CoB email server failed completely. iTech was called in, but their diagnosis was not favorable. The decision was made by Doty to let the CoB server "die" and to simply move over to the USM email system.

Of course, Doty's decision wasn't the first bad decision with regard to the CoB's email server. Just a few months earlier, Doty participated in the decision to terminate the in-house technology support position then held by Kevin Sellers. Sellers, a popular, longtime CoB staff member, eventually took a job with iTech at its central office. Doty's decision regarding Sellers is interesting, since a faculty grass roots movement was started to use faculty travel money to help defray the CoB's cost in keeping Sellers employed with the CoB as its tech support staff. As usual, however, Doty went against any faculty initiative and participated in terminating Sellers' position in the CoB. Just months later, the email server expired.

In 2008 dollars, a new, top-of-the-line Dell server might cost $30,000. That's $30,000 for a Dell server, Microsoft server software, and accoutrements. That's a maximum $30,000 monetary cost (in today's terms) to replace the server and keep the longstanding "@cba.usm.edu" emails active and with minimal interruption. Harold Doty decided that cost was just too high.
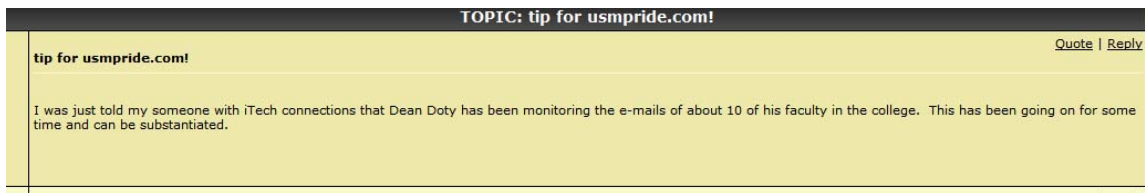
What Doty ignored, however, was the cost to faculty of losing the server. Numerous faculty reported losing dozens of emails between the "death" of the CoB server and the switchover to the USM server. Some of those lost emails reportedly contained communications from scholarly journals regarding article revisions, revisions that were lost or delayed significantly because of the permanent server crash. Other emails contained communications from coauthors regarding research. Still others contained messages from students regarding requests for assistance from their professors. Most, if not all, were lost. Doty made a decision, and the CoB faculty and students were left to piece together the missing emails; of course, passing costs on to others was no new issue for Harold Doty.

But why was the decision necessary at all? Why couldn't Sellers be retained AND a new server be purchased? After all, the CoB employed a full-time fundraiser, Emile Dieth,

whose singular duty it was to raise external monies to support student and faculty development. Surely Dieth had, after a period of several years, cultivated some contacts that would have been willing to fund purchase of a new – or even slightly used – email server. Doty continually praised Dieth publicly for his fundraising prowess, and yet there was no money for a new email server.

It's not as if Doty's hands were tied. We have all heard Doty tell the collected faculty at the University of South Florida that, "when I take my money out of my booze account, I can pretty much do anything I want with it." If there was money in the Booze Account, why wasn't Doty willing to spend it on a true capital improvement?

Several theories presented themselves at the time, and others present themselves today. First, there existed a theory that Doty simply "allowed" the server to crash so as to force CoB faculty to use the USM server so that Doty could have CoB emails monitored by iTech. In fact, this post appeared on the AAUP-USM Message Board in mid-2006:

None of the posters immediately defended Doty. Perhaps this theory has some credibility.

Another theory was that the email server "had" to be crashed to protect the CoB administrative team from some ill-advised emails sent just prior to the crash.

Still another was that Doty didn't have enough money in the Booze Account to fund a new server AND provide his BAC Professorships/Bribes that he doled out annually to his sycophants. Of course, these were the same bribes that Doty gave to new faculty members Akbar Marvasti and Sami Dakhlia just prior to the EFIB re-vote that voided a legitimate faculty vote and replaced it with George Carter's power grab.

As we look back on the D. Harold Doty administration of the CoB, we see an administration that was plagued by one scandal after another. It will likely be a long time before the book on the Doty administration gets closed. There are simply too many skeletons that need further examination.