

CoB Flashback: Spring 2001

Join us as we flash back to spring 2001, when the CoB was known as the CBA (College of Business Administration), and William Gunther was its dean.

Those new to USM's CoB might not know it, but the CoB presents the Louis K. Brandt Faculty Research Award to a faculty member each odd-numbered year. The award is given out at the annual spring awards banquet and carries with it a \$2,500 to \$3,000 stipend. Nominees/finalists are judged on the basis of their scholarly publications over the previous two calendar years.

The 2001 Louis K. Brandt Research Award contest is a particularly interesting one given the way events unfolded that spring. Within a month of the annual CBA awards banquet, word leaked that the 2001 Brandt Award would, as it had so many years before, be split among multiple recipients. However, the leak was even more specific than that – word was that the 2001 Brandt Award process resulted in a tie between two economists: Franklin Mixon and Edward Nissan.

As soon as news of the tie began to spread around JGH, people began asking questions about the process, because it was widely known at the time that Mixon's 1999-2000 record was superior to Nissan's. Within hours of the initial rumor, another leak developed regarding the 2001 Brandt Award process. This one was that the "external reviewer" was none other than Mohsen Bahmani-Oskooee, a close personal friend and co-author of then-CBA Associate Dean, Farhang Niroomand. It was also leaked at that time that Niroomand had selected Bahmani-Oskooee himself, even though Nissan and Niroomand are also close friends and co-authors.

It was at this point that things began to unravel. When word of the process reached Mixon, he (Mixon) reportedly submitted a written request to withdraw his (Mixon's) name from consideration for the 2001 Brandt Award. Upon receipt of Mixon's withdrawal, two CBA administrators reportedly visited Mixon in an attempt to convince him (Mixon) to rescind his withdrawal statement. Neither of these was Niroomand.

Mixon ultimately remained steadfast behind his decision to withdraw, and in the face of intense criticism throughout Greene Hall at that time, both Niroomand and Nissan stood firm in their participation in the Brandt Award process. Later that spring, the annual awards banquet arrived and the 2001 Brandt Award was presented to Nissan, just as everyone in attendance anticipated. However, it was at that time that Gunther took the podium once again and announced that, through the generous contributions of the CBA's Business Advisory Council, a *new* CBA faculty award – the Business Advisory Council Outstanding Faculty Award – had been developed and would be inaugurated that very evening. Gunther then launched into a speech filled with accolades for the inaugural winner – economist Franklin Mixon.

Gunther's speech reportedly upstaged that year's Brandt Award presentation, and Mixon reportedly received several thousand dollars as the first ever recipient of the BAC

Outstanding Faculty Award. To hear those who were around at the time tell it, Gunther wanted to make good on the disastrous episode that Niroomand had wrought on the CBA.

As postscript, it's worth noting that Mixon's 2001 BAC Outstanding Faculty Award was not only the first of its kind, it was the last. Not since that spring night in 2001, when Gunther righted a Niroomand wrong, has that particular award been presented in the college.