

CoB No Longer a “Magnet School”

Through the years, particularly those years under the direction of former Dean Tyrone Black, USM’s business school was a respectable organization that boasted at least one (and usually more) notable scholar in each academic unit. Those individuals gave the organization a sense of legitimacy that worked to offset the fact that USM was primarily seen as a directional school in the Deep South – tags that generally worked against the institution in one way or another. The “have heard of” scholars in each unit performed a vital role, and one that did not necessarily require active involvement. They piqued the interest of job market candidates who were considering employment in USM’s business college. That interest was not necessarily piqued by the prospects of working *with* any unit’s “magnet scholar.” Simply working *nearby* a person who lends legitimacy to the unit, and consequently the organization, was often enough to sway the candidate to come to USM.

It was that “magnetism” that Black maintained, and fostered, and that the CBA of old thrived on for so many years. Now, it’s easy to see that USM’s business college is no longer a “magnet school.” There are almost no magnet scholars left on the CoB’s Hattiesburg campus, and there are certainly none around Long Beach at the CoB’s other environs.¹ Though many would say that former CoB Dean Harold Doty, and his Associate Dean Farhang Niroomand, “demagnetized” the CoB, this report goes beyond simply assessing responsibility for the CoB’s demise in this area. The report only takes stock in the demagnetization, and looks toward the future.

Table 1
“Magnet Scholars” in USM’s CoB

Unit	Magnet Scholar(s)
ECO	
FIN	Tom Lindley
MGT	
MKT	
TM	

Table 1 above shows what are believed to be the “magnet scholars” left in USM’s CoB. The table covers only five of the CoB’s eight main units, primarily because the remaining three units (i.e., ACC, FM, and MIS) almost never delve into the academic job market. By not participating in the academic job market, the presence of “magnet scholars” is not felt, at least in terms of the focus of this report. As Table 1 above indicates, only FIN retains one (or more) magnet scholars (out of the five other CoB units). That magnet is Tom Lindley, a

¹ At the height of Black’s tenure as CBA Dean, there were numerous magnet scholars in Hattiesburg, and, amazingly, there were usually some in Long Beach.

professor of finance who has been with the CoB for a number of years. Lindley has published in several leading academic journals, such as *Journal of Finance*, *American Economic Review*, and *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. These are believed by many to be the top journals in each of three separate academic fields/specialties. As such, Lindley's record is quite amazing. That record has served as a magnet for the CoB in attracting a number of finance scholars to USM. These have included Ken Cyree, who now holds a named professorship at Ole Miss, and Drew Winters, who is now with the finance department at Texas Tech. Clearly, Lindley's presence has worked in the ways described above in this report.

What about the other units? As Table 1 suggests, there are no other magnets. In fact, the CoB no longer appears to be the "magnet school" it once did under Black's leadership. Today, MKT is floundering like a rudderless ship. Assistant professor of marketing, Talai Osmonbekov, was clearly on his way to being a magnet scholar, but he has only recently decided to join the marketing group at Northern Arizona University. Osmonbekov's case is well-documented here at USMNEWS.NET. To summarize briefly, he was passed over time-and-again during the merit raise processes in the CoB. The latest snub came to the benefit of Michael Wittmann, the Draughn Professor of Marketing. Unlike Osmonbekov, who has multiple publications in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* and another in the *Journal of Business Research*, Wittmann has yet to produce any A-level research, despite having been in the academic environment longer than Osmonbekov. Compared to Osmonbekov, the only people who have "heard of" Wittmann either work in Greene Hall or live in the Draughn home.

Two of the other units, ECO and MGT, have lost (or will lose) one or more magnet scholars in recent times, and there is no indication that any replacements were found. TM, on the other hand, never had a magnet scholar, yet seemed to find a potential one in Johye Hwang. The problem TM had is that none of its faculty could stand the prospect of working for former TM Chair Cheri Becker, including Hwang, who recently departed the CoB for the University of Missouri.

What about finance? George Carter's rule of the EFIB (since 2005) has effectively eliminated Lindley's presence in the FIN unit. Now, FIN can only hope to draw candidates in from the magnetism of John Clark, the most senior professor remaining. Of course, there is nothing magnetic about Clark's record of scholarship thus far, especially given that he spends more time writing outside of finance than he does staying within its confines. The only other finance faculty at this time are Farooq Malik – who is really an economist – and Matthew Hood, who seems to be following in Clark's "working in other disciplines" footsteps. So, not only is the CoB no longer a magnet school, FIN, its only unit with *any* academic magnetism left, is rapidly fading away.