

Do You Have Integrity, President Bennett? Prove It!

Well, you've had a chance "to get your feet on the ground," Mr. Bennett. USM is publishing documents that are the words and ideas taken from others "without proper citation."

Here are the details of an ongoing failure of academic integrity (taken from an extensive study, "Ethics, Power, and Academic Corruption"):

The Academic Integrity Policy

...[Then-]Dean Harold Doty and Marketing Professor Laurie Babin seemed to use Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy as boilerplate. For example, USM's "College of Business" was substituted for the Whitman School's name, while the wording and substance of the work were retained. As noted above, by comparison, ***the Whitman School chose to give credit for the ideas and work of the creative sources of its Academic Integrity Policy.*** This indicated that Syracuse University did not consider the Academic Integrity Policy was boilerplate. Rather, Syracuse's extensive list of sources indicated that proper citation was appropriate... Also, note that the only part of Syracuse's "Academic Integrity Policy" that USM administrators and faculty did not copy was Syracuse's extensive citation list of sources of its "Academic Integrity Policy."

Plagiarism is Still an Open Question at USM

Colleagues did not set out to find questionable documents during our AACSB reaccreditation process, nor did they search for others after they discovered the first instance. The first questionable document seemed like a chance occurrence, a simple mistake easily corrected or explained. Colleagues were aware that the Accreditation Committee could have said, "Oops! We forgot to include a citation." Or, "It's customary for schools to copy from the accreditation documents of other, successful schools." USM administrators did not do either.

The second instance of copying "without proper citation" was found coincidentally in efforts to learn what other schools think about plagiarism. Its discovery, however, was more worrisome given the citations included in the original document but not USM's copied version. Nevertheless, USM's administrators, involved faculty, and AACSB might have made a case that an Academic Integrity Policy was boilerplate. They might have simply and publicly stated for the benefit of all AACSB institutions that accredited members were free to copy other Colleges' submissions to the AACSB and publish them without citation. However, they did not.

The principle researcher had early on recognized that the events unfolding were a proper subject for study regardless of the outcome. If USM and AACSB embraced transparency and an open discussion—as they so often claim, it would have been an inspiring case report about

how they worked to improve the ethics and understanding of all AACSB members. More importantly, the report would have provided the dialogue and conclusions with regard to practical details of the parameters of plagiarism. Alternatively, if the administrators at USM and AACSB chose secrecy, refused to build an understanding of plagiarism to the benefit of all AACSB members, and failed to persuade USM administrators to follow its standards and advice, the study would be a cautionary report that the AACSB does not signal academic quality. The choice was USM's and AACSB's. They both chose dishonesty.

Note that the choices USM and AACSB administrators made and are chronicled in this case study continue to be relevant today. ***The USM COB's copied "Academic Integrity Policy" remains posted on its website without the original school's lengthy list of citations. (<http://www.usm.edu/business/academic-integrity-policy>. Last accessed April 2, 2014.)*** Anyone who reads the "Academic Integrity Policy" on USM's website is led to believe that it is USM's original work. Thus, in the absence of an investigation or open dialogue, the question whether "Guidelines" and "Academic Integrity Policy" constitute plagiarism remains explicitly unanswered. This was a choice USM administrators and AACSB officials made.

It would also be quite simple to cite Syracuse University's "Academic Integrity Policy." Why not?

Furthermore, consistent with scientific norms, colleagues offered them [USM and AACSB administrators] an opportunity to comment on this research. USM administrators ignored the offer. The AACSB advised that, "We have no comments."

Are you, President Bennett, going to continue your and USM's unethical behavior? Your [unethical behavior](#) is staring you in the face, every day.