

Don't Like Tenure Risk? Then Do What He Did!

Imagine our interest upon pulling this e-mail out of the box:

From: cob-ecfinintbus-bounces@usm.edu on behalf of Sami Dakhlija
[sami.dakhlija@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 14, 2007
To: EFIB Department
Subject: Re: [Cob-ecfinintbus] Suggestions

. . . Now to answer your question: I do not recall having been quoted a magic number. I have been told, however, that my publication record would have been "more than enough" to get me tenure at USM (just as it should have been enough at UA, but that's a different story and goes back to what John so eloquently wrote last night). So here's the data once more: 3 As and 3 Bs would be *more* than enough.

The e-mail above is an excerpt from a communication to EFIB faculty from assistant professor of economics Sami Dakhlija (see below), and it is,



Sami Dakhlija

according to USMNEWS.NET sources, part of an e-mail discussion about tenure standards that was taking place in the EFIB shortly after the AACSB Peer Review Team departed the CoB. As part of their findings, the AACSB PRT noted that junior professors in the CoB seem to have no clue what is expected of them as far as tenure and promotion is concerned (for more, see the Accreditation page in the Archives of www.usmnews.net).

In his e-mail above, Dakhlija informs his new colleagues at USM that his publication record -- 3 As and 3Bs -- is not only enough to warrant a positive tenure decision at USM, ". . . it should have been enough at UA. . ." (according to sources, UA=University of Alabama, Dakhlija's previous employer). Dakhlija then alludes to the possibility that his negative tenure decision at the University of Alabama may have been a political decision, citing something that "John so eloquently wrote wrote last night

[i.e., 2/13/07]." The "John" in Dakhli's e-mail is associate professor of finance John Clark. An excerpt of Clark's e-mail, which was also part of the e-mail discussion about tenure standards among the EFIB faculty, from the "[previous] night" is inserted below.

From: cob-ecfinintbus-bounces@usm.edu on behalf of John Clark
[john.clark@usm.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2007
To: EFIB Department
Subject: Re: [Cob-ecfinintbus] Suggestions

Unfortunately, what you have been told in an interview has very little relevance unless it is in writing. In my 10 year career I have worked for 5 deans, 5 dept heads, 4 provosts and 3 central administrators (soon to be 4) all of these individuals have had different ideas about P&T with the required number of publications ranging from "a handful" to 3 Journal of Finance articles. I have been fortunate enough to have several mentors put things in perspective over the course of my career. Many of you are familiar with . . . idea of appropriate tenure requirements (a few of you may have even blindly walked into a version of this as a response to a question in an interview, I know I did), which (paraphrasing) basically says that you want to make sure that when you go up for tenure that another school would be glad to have you . . . The second piece of advice . . . is that the tenure process is such that if the powers that be want to keep you, they will use every resource available to do so and if they want to get rid of you, nothing short of a Nobel Prize will prevent them from doing so.

Is this problem unique to USM? I doubt it. Do I think that this is the way things should be? No. But the reality is that this is the way things are and I doubt our efforts will inspire much change. My advice to the untenured (including myself) is to remember that publications are the currency of our profession and the only currency that is portable.

Clark's e-mail describes the tenure process as one "such that if the powers that be want to keep you, they will use every resource available to do so and if they want to get rid of you, nothing short of a Nobel Prize will prevent them from doing so." Clark (see below) then offers the bleak



John Clark

prediction that nothing the younger EFIB faculty do "will inspire much change." The highlighted portion appears to be the portion grasped by Dakhlia in the first e-mail above.

Dakhlia's declaration that his UA record was enough to garner tenure at both UA and USM, except for a politicized tenure process at UA, came like a shot across the bow of those who may be making the decision on his (Dakhlia's) "T&P" decisions in the near future. No one at USMNEWS.NET has ever seen such a move, nor has anyone in the CoB we contacted about this story.¹

Of course, the ending to this story will not be written for years. Who knows if the "3As and 3Bs" list will count toward his USM or tenure, or if Dakhlia will be required to go out and replicate the "3 As and 3 Bs" feat once more for officials in the CoB. Only time will tell.

¹ One source noted that such a statement might be one that would serve to politicize Dakhlia's tenure process in USM's College of Business. If so, it is interesting that he (Dakhlia) would make such a statement given that he believes the negative UA decision was "political."