

A Plagiarized Policy on Plagiarism?

by Duane Cobb

The recent revelation that the CoB's Academic Integrity Policy was copied, the better part of word-for-word, from Syracuse University's Whitman School of Management is barely a surprise to many in the CoB. Since the beginning of 2006-07, USM's College of Business has been in a state of turmoil resulting from a number of ethics-challenged decisions made by the CoB's administration. Now, the recent prediction on this website -- that we may be on the eve of a national AACSB scandal -- appears to be coming to fruition.

When USMPRIDE broke the story (on 23 February 2007) that the CoB's Academic Integrity Policy had been substantially copied from a similar Policy at SU's Whitman School of Management, the minds of many CoB faculty and staff almost assuredly turned to marketing professor Laurie Babin, the former chair of the CoB committee that "drafted" ("copied"?), under the direction of new CoB Dean D. Harold Doty (former Chair in SU's Whitman School), the CoB's Academic Integrity Policy. At the time of its completion, Doty touted the new policy as one that USM's administration could use as a model for the entire university. Little did anyone know then that Babin's committee had copied SU's policy, and *without proper attribution*.

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If you've been following the CoB's troubling times over the past several weeks, you'll recognize Laurie Babin also as the individual who scolded the rest of the CoB, at a recent faculty meeting, about being soft on pursuing and prosecuting student plagiarism in the College. At that time, Babin remarked that all the tools are there -- with websites such as turnitin.com -- for detecting such student malfeasance. As she so piously stated at that time -- "I'm tired of being the 'bad guy,'" referring of course to her perception that other CoB faculty have been derelict in their duty to prosecute known cases of student plagiarism.

Now that it has come to light that the CoB's own plagiarism policy appears to have itself been copied, who will be the first to suggest that Laurie Babin now face the former MBA students who received the brunt of her campaign against plagiarism?

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I am sure those former students would love to sit on a panel and face the professor they would clearly see as hypocritical on the issue of the plagiarism. And, if Babin gets the opportunity to e-mail the business dean at Syracuse and ask about the possibility of copying the Whitman School's Academic Integrity Policy *without proper citation*, then all of the CoB's students -- past and present, graduate and undergraduate -- deserve the same opportunity to mitigate the problems they face(d) as a result of Babin's (or other CoB faculty's) allegations of student plagiarism.

Once again the Doty administration presides over a troubling situation. In the past, he (Doty) has sent underlings out to face the music. That was the case when CoB UG Programs Director Gwen Pate was sent out to face the criticism of students over the CoB's misguided plans for the HVAC replacement. It was also the case when accounting professor Charles Jordan e-mailed officials at two separate universities asking them for permission to use their AACSB definitions *without proper citation*.

CoB students are getting an education this year about PRIDE, mainly consisting of the picture that there is very little in the way of professionalism, respect, integrity, etc., in those individuals that make up the CoB's current administration. In just a few short weeks, we'll all get together for CoB Awards Night 2007. Outside of student academic achievement, there's been little to celebrate.