

A College in Crisis

by Duane Cobb

New USM President Martha Saunders now knows what many of you have known for some time. That is, USM's College of Business is a College in crisis. And, though some in the CoB seem incapable of seeing it, the crisis goes well beyond the AACSB Maintenance of Accreditation process.

Saunders now knows that, in the CoB at least, there are two routes to tenure and promotion. One is reserved for the friends and family of CoB administrators. The good ol' boy system is one for slackers and "nice guys," and it's built to last. Serving the CoB for decades, this system has treated several CoB good ol' boys well, including the system's spokesperson, EFIB Chairman George Carter.

Yes, according to Carter, if "you're not a good ol' boy here, you have to get it on merit." The problem for those on the merit track to P&T, the target is elusive. Just ask Trellis Green, once an untenured assistant professor who tried and tried to hit Carter's target. The problem for Green was that the target was always moving, until the time *he* became the target. The target of Carter's "tenure club," that is.

When you're the target of CoB administrators, life can be hard. Green's lawsuit against CoB administrators began in 1994 and ended in 1997, when those administrator-bullies settled the suit and provided Green with a promotion, a raise, and an undisclosed financial settlement. Most recently, the wrath of the CoB's ruling class has been felt by assistant professor of

management, Daniel Michael. Michael failed his 3rd Year Review during 2006-07, and was "awarded" a terminal contract for the 2007-08 academic year. Yet, despite failing his own 3rd Year Review in 2003-04, Kenneth Zantow was provided the opportunity for a so-called 4th Year Review. That favor came from long-time Zantow friend, and former CoB Dean, D. Harold Doty. Three years later, and thousands of dollars richer, Zantow is now a fully vested member of the CoB good ol' boys gang.

The accountants lead the way in good ol' boy membership. Jim Henderson, the CoB's golfer-in-residence, Rod Posey, of "more than 100" publications infamy, and new Interim SAIS Director Steven Jackson, who appears to be willing to do and/or say anything to rise in the good ol' boy organization, are just three examples. They join management professors Stephen Bushardt and David Duhon, two of the most well-known good ol' boys in the modern CoB. And, Interim CoB Dean Alvin Williams is proving to be one of the more energetic leaders the organization has ever known.

Of course, Saunders sits on top of this notorious organization. She has learned a lot about it recent days, in addition to whatever familiarity with the group's comings and goings that she brought with her from her days before becoming USM's President. What remains to be seen is what Saunders does with the knowledge. That knowledge, and her reaction to it, have everything to do with the crisis -- whether it lingers or recedes. The nation is watching, and waiting.