

All Bets are Off Now

by Duane Cobb

Just six hours after a *31st & Pearl* columnist at USMNEWS.NET predicted that the CoB would pass its AACSB “make-up” test in the spring of 2008, Interim CoB Dean Alvin Williams surprised many in the Southern Miss community with an e-mail message announcing his plans to retire from USM in June of 2008. According to Williams’ 12-Nov-07 e-mail to CoB faculty and staff, the decision to retire at this time was a “very, very difficult” one. No doubt. It came on a Monday – suggesting that a weekend of soul-searching took place – in mid-November, three months before the AACSB Peer Review Team is set to re-visit the CoB’s Greene Hall.

Date: Mon, 12 Nov 2007
From: Alvin.Williams@usm.edu
To: cof@usm.edu
Cc: David.Lewis@usm.edu; Theresa.Hopewell@usm.edu; John.Madden@usm.edu
Subject: CoB/Dean's Retirement
Colleagues:

After about 10 years of service to Southern Miss, I have made the very difficult decision to retire on June 30, 2008. I am happy to see

From my own reading of Williams’ e-mail announcement, I would have to say that all bets on the CoB’s re-accreditation prospects may be off, at least as far as 2008 is concerned. Remember, Dean Williams informed CoB faculty at the 31-Aug-07 faculty meeting that a 2009, 2010, etc. review could occur. (Heck, to listen to Williams back then, the AACSB could make annual visits to the CoB without taking accreditation away.) His recent announcement could signal the possibility of such future visits by the AACSB.

So, what are we left with now? One thought would be that the CoB remains in crisis, as it has been since former Dean Harold Doty took over the reigns in the summer of 2003. There is currently a search for a permanent CoB Dean, but that search is being carried out in relative

secrecy. Add to that the fact that Williams will leave behind various “Interim” chairs and directors for a new Dean to deal with. Next, throw in a “6th Year AACSB Review” along with the usual ill-advised activities that seem to constitute daily life in the CoB, and you have a mud pie an elephant would choke on.

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One thing Williams’ resignation e-mail does is ease Tony Henthorne’s worries, for now at least. By announcing in November, Henthorne is able to initiate the search to replace Williams. Several management and marketing candidates have recently visited the CoB, and there is still time to add more in order to make sure the search is a success.

It’s Henthorne’s long-term situation that’s more intriguing. Like the perennial scene on *Animal Planet*, Henthorne is now the lone lioness guarding the CoB, and he is increasingly being surrounded by the pack of local hyenas, comprised of EFIB Chair George Carter, management professor Stephen Bushardt, former CoB Dean Harold Doty, etc. There’s no way the hyenas can be contained now. Henthorne can only contemplate avenues for retreat, before it’s too late.