

“Ethical fading”? Or Misconduct So Obvious Administrators And Faculty Know What They Are Doing is Wrong?

A recent interesting article in [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) is relevant to behavior of faculty and administrators at The University of Southern Mississippi:

Mr. Harris found, among other issues promoting “ethical fading,” that: “Administrators and trustees “sanitized their involvement” by employing positive, euphemistic language. Using such language “enhanced self-perceptions of morality.”

In my case research at the University of Southern Mississippi and Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business euphemistic language advanced plagiarism and supported lying about it.

Here are some observations we learned through Mississippi Open Records requests (Taken from [Ethics, Power, and Academic Corruption Parts 1 and 2](#) (Available at Amazon)):

In communications between University of Southern Mississippi administrators and the AACSB, a secret email from Accounting Professor Charles Jordan to Harmon College of Business Administration (Central Missouri State University) Dean Joan Mansfield was discovered. It postdated, but was in response to colleagues’ reports of copying documents without attribution by USM administrators and faculty. In it, Professor Jordan asked HCBA Dean for permission to use their “Guidelines” he had already copied ‘without proper citation’ (Jordan’s language):

‘We very much like [your] definitions [“Guidelines”] and have tweaked them a bit to fit our needs ... our dean would like to get permission from you to use these definitions in our reports without proper citation...’ (Emphasis was included in the original email.)

The response from Harmon Dean Mansfield was, ‘That’s great that you want to use our definitions! That would be fine with us...’

With this approval, Dean Doty wrote a secret email to the AACSB:

‘To make a long story short, we have both oral and written permission to use the documents in question without formal citation to the original school.’

In another secret communication with the AACSB, Dean Doty characterized copying Syracuse University’s Academic Integrity Policy as ‘benchmarking.’ He wrote Dean Ted Cummings, University of Houston, Clear Lake, who was Chairman of the AACSB Peer Visitation Team:

‘As with other matters, we have permission to use the documents. Maybe you should ask [colleague from Syracuse] if he is okay with USM benchmarking Whitman School on Academic Integrity – there [sic] policy is very good and well tested. We started with their

document and edited it for our purposes. We did not reinvent the wheel!

Dean Doty and Marketing Professor Laurie Babin seemed to use Syracuse'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." Note that AACSB provides boilerplate for members' use in advertising its membership in the AACSB, for example, but does not provide boilerplate for codes of ethics or other documents submitted to AACSB in support of a members application for accreditation or reaccreditation.

The AACSB accepted Doty and Jordan's rationales—"Ethical fading." As a matter of fact, the School of Accountancy still shows Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy "without proper citation." Also note that C. Edward Arrington, who was the Vice Chairman of the Visitation Team, was notified of the observations we acquired. He supported the School of Accountancy's reaccreditation. Also consider that Professor Arrington had both undergraduate and graduate degrees from USM. Arrington, a professor at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, prominently promoted his USM degrees, including a Master of Arts in American Literature, on his website biography."

None of these academics would have tolerated such behavior from their students.

Details are also provided in [University and AACSB Diversity, Case Research](#), available free at the American Accounting Association's website.

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