

Upated, 12/19/06

## Ethics Update

A recent poll conducted by Playboy magazine indicates that 56% of MBA students, 45% of law students, 39% of graduate social science/humanities students, and 49% of graduate medical/health care students plagiarize or cheat in their academic work.<sup>1</sup>

Consider that the MBA students exhibited the highest percentage of academic misconduct in the poll. One might not be taxed to draw the connection between such survey results and corporate scandals like Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, etc. It appears that business students just don't understand societal expectations as well as other graduate students do.

On the other hand, perhaps they understand them better than their counterparts. CoB resident ethicist George H. Carter has stated on record that "'Research has shown that the ethics that people practice come first from superiors...'" In light of Carter's statement, the Playboy poll results shouldn't be at all shocking, and one might expect the results of a similar poll to be even more damning if conducted only with USM MBA students. Why?

IF Carter is correct, and IF subordinates exhibit only those ethics exhibited by their superiors, then USM students don't stand a chance. Only a matter of weeks ago, researchers at [www.usmpride.com](http://www.usmpride.com) uncovered potential plagiarism in AACSB documents that were being circulated as part of the CoB's AACSB reaffirmation process. The documents, large portions of which were copied from the AACSB documents of Central Missouri State University, were exposed at [www.usmpride.com](http://www.usmpride.com) as being unethical. The editor of [www.usmpride.com](http://www.usmpride.com), Dr. C.M. DePree, Jr., raised these issues directly with CoB Dean Harold Doty, the USM Ombudsman, and others. Yet, none of the USM administrators took action to correct what appears to have been an act of plagiarism. Apparently, the CoB's Academic Integrity Policy was intended to govern only students, even though faculty are also explicitly cited as well.

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<sup>1</sup> "Raw Data: Significa, Insignifica, Stats and Facts. 'Ethics 101'" Playboy, January 2007, page 25.

How tough is the CoB's Integrity Policy on students? MBA professor Laurie Babin discovered acts of plagiarism in her own MBA course during 2005-2006, yet it has been reported that none of the offenders was forced into any real punishment outside of their own marks in her course. And, the punishment that did occur was reportedly the result of her concern and initiative regarding the students' actions. Babin described the plagiarism case at the spring 2006 CoB faculty meeting, wherein she chastised her CoB colleagues for failing to hold the line on academic integrity in the College. In doing so, she invoked her now well-known "I'm tired of being the 'bad guy' [of the CoB]" phrase.

Last Friday (December 8, 2006), the CoB Faculty, at the behest of Doty, Carter, and other CoB administrators, supported sending what may be plagiarized documents to AACSB with the full knowledge that the documents may have been plagiarized. In the words of Doty, "[Plagiarism] will not be an issue." The secret ballot vote was 49 supporting the document and 6 opposing it. Last Friday's vote showed that the vast majority of CoB faculty don't have a problem with plagiarizing the work of others. If Carter is right, then we shouldn't be surprised when CoB students follow suit.

**Updated, 12/19/06**

Readers have already responded to this report with interest. Based on some tips, we will be running an extension of this report that examines some ethics issues surrounding the CoB's graduate business curricula structure. That report promises to be interesting, given the feedback we are receiving. Look for this additional report in the next few days. It will be set up so that additions to it are made possible.