

We continue a series recounting what a number of readers have characterized as misconduct and stupidity of past and current University of Southern Mississippi faculty and administrators. The facts underlying these conclusions have been fully documented. When one reader suggested this series, he opined “before someone comes to Southern Miss as a student or puts a career on the line as faculty member, “Ethics, Power and Academic Corruption” should be required reading.” The tenth installment follows. (See, the [first](#), [second](#), [third](#), [fourth](#), [fifth](#), [sixth](#), [seventh](#), [eighth](#), [ninth](#) and [tenth](#) installments here.)

...Colleagues expected to hear directly from the AACSB. After a couple of months without another word from the AACSB, an attorney acquired secret documents that, among other things, reported that the AACSB Manager, Accreditation Services, emailed Dean Doty and advised him that:

... We recommend that you provide the peer review team with a written response to the allegations prior to the visit.

Secrecy

Although colleagues kept Directors of Accountancy Posey and Lewis, Business College Dean Doty, Provost Grimes, President Thames, and the AACSB informed of their activities, neither USM administrators nor AACSB reciprocated. At this point, colleagues made a commitment to learn what was happening. So, they acquired information about what the AACSB was doing with the “complaints” through open records requests.

University administrators and lawyers refused to comply with a routine and lawful freedom of information request. An attorney volunteered to obtain release of secret communications between USM administrators and AACSB. Although the AACSB invoked confidentiality of its accreditation processes, once information from the AACSB was received at USM, it became public information subject to the Mississippi Open Records Law. The secret communications are among the documents supporting this study and are available upon request.

In communications between USM administrators and the AACSB, a secret email from Accounting Professor Charles Jordan to HCBA Dean Joan Mansfield was discovered. It postdated, but was in response to colleagues’ reports of, copying documents without attribution to USM’s COB and University administrators. In it, Professor Jordan asked HCBA Dean for permission to use their “Guidelines” he had already copied “without proper citation”:

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...⁵

⁵ Compare “without proper citation” to “without citation.” Use of the former seems to imply an admission not to act according to standards or conventions, i.e., an admission of plagiarism. On the other hand,

(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.

Some colleagues were astonished; some laughed; some had expected the petty corruption; but all colleagues agreed that if a student accused of plagiarism offered the same excuse to a faculty member—“I got permission from my friend to copy his paper without proper citation”—s/he would probably subject him/her to the school’s disciplinary process. The colleagues’ main concern now, however, became whether the AACSB would persuade Dean Doty and President Thames to follow USM’s rules and AACSB standards and advice...

“without citation” does not include “proper” and does not, therefore, seem to invoke an admission not to act in accordance with standards or conventions. It would also seem easier to leave out the word, “proper,” but a conscious act is required to include it.