

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 fourth installment follows. (See, the [first](#), [second](#), and [third](#) installment here.)

...Observations reported hereinafter were guided by scientific norms advanced by Argyris, Putnam and Smith (1985), and Cooper and Morgan (2008). They include a testable hypothesis, explicit inference, sufficient evidence, and alternative perspectives. Since an explicit form of inference structures the testable hypothesis and organizes alternative perspectives and evidence, they are presented next in Hypothesis and Explicit Inference.

Hypothesis and Explicit Inference

The proposition, “AACSB is a reliable authority on academic quality”, is not directly testable. It can, however, be structured to be tested. The following test hypothesis and test proposition provide such a structure:

- ***Test hypothesis:*** If the AACSB is a reliable authority on academic quality, then it complies with, and persuades its members to comply with, its standards and advice.

The test hypothesis is a conditional statement. Its consequent is a testable proposition:

- ***Test proposition:*** The AACSB complies with, and persuades its members to comply with, its standards and advice.

The evidence offered in this report demonstrates that it is false that the AACSB complies with, and persuades members to comply with, its standards and advice. Given the logical structure of the test hypothesis and the negated test proposition, the following conclusion would be true:

Test conclusion: Therefore, the AACSB is not a reliable authority on academic quality. This inference is sound.² The next sections provide sufficient evidence to support the negation of the test proposition.

² A sound inference employs a valid argument form and has true premises. A true conclusion follows. The valid argument form is modus tollens.

College and University: Evidence and Alternative Perspectives

As the School of Accountancy (SOA) and College of Business (COB) at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) prepared reports in support of its AACSB reaccreditation, the Chairman of our Accreditation Committee, George Carter, asked faculty members to review the documents before they were submitted for a college-wide vote. The reports were emailed in Microsoft Word format. During the faculty review, a colleague discovered that a document had been copied without attribution from submissions of a recently reaccredited college. The Microsoft properties function identified the source. A visit to the source, the Harmon College of Business Administration website, confirmed it. (HCBA at University of Central Missouri (UCM), formerly Central Missouri State University)

A portion of the copied document follows:

An important component of faculty sufficiency is the degree to which they participate in the life of the institution beyond teaching and research. Every full-time faculty member, including those in non-tenure track positions, is expected to contribute meaningfully to the non-teaching activities of the department, college, and university. These individuals will be classified as “participating faculty.” Classification as participating is necessary for...

(See, Appendix 1 for details of the copied document.)

A comparison of USM’s and CMU’s documents revealed evidence of a potential problem. The words copied without attribution or quotation marks are shown in red. The words in black indicate changes made to the document at USM’s College of Business.

Colleagues³ advised our Chairman of the Accreditation Committee, George Carter, who was identified in the Microsoft properties function as the last person at USM to modify CMU’s document, that it did not have a citation. At the time, colleagues did not inform other faculty members because a lack of citation could have been a simple oversight and easily been corrected or explained as unnecessary. While colleagues awaited a response, then-Dean Harold Doty submitted the questionable document to the entire faculty for a vote of approval. Most faculty members did not yet know what their colleagues had discovered.

³ “Colleagues” included four full professors, two associate professors and one assistant professor. They discovered the documents were copied without attribution. At the outset and to this day, the author considered the discovery of the questionable document a proper subject for a case study. His assumption was that the behavior of the AACSB and USM administrators and colleagues would be of interest regardless of what the participants chose to do.