

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

### **Ombudsman, Vice President for Research, EEOC, Provost, President, et al.**

Responding to the requirement in USM’s Faculty Handbook, colleagues provided the copied document, and the document from which it was copied, to USM’s Ombudsman. The Ombudsman, John Harsh, though verbally stating that the copied document was “troubling,” subsequently sent the following email:

I had the opportunity to speak to Cecil Burge [Vice-President for Research] about an appropriate “ombudsman” for issues like this... He agrees that we don’t have such a person on this campus. He suggested that I pass along to you that you might consider talking to the EEOC person on campus.

Ombudsman Harsh’s email seemed inconsistent with the Faculty Handbook’s representation: “Alleged breaches of scholarly integrity are investigated promptly and fully by the University.” Equally inconsistent was Vice-President Burge’s suggestion to consult “the EEOC person on campus.” What did workplace discrimination have to do with “[a]lleged breaches of scholarly integrity [being] investigated promptly and fully by the University”? Nevertheless, colleagues presented Ombudsman Harsh’s recommendation and the documents to the EEOC Officer, Rebecca Woodrick. In an email, they asked her if she was the “ ‘ombudsman’ for issues like this.” She answered via email, “Not my area of expertise.” And, she declined to participate.

Colleagues also consulted faculty and administrators throughout the USM campus. They contacted leaders of the Faculty Senate (Professor and one time Provost Myron Henry and Professor Stephen Judd) and the local AAUP (Professor D. Joe Olmi) to review the documents and join them asking questions and seeking answers. Colleagues argued that clarification of plagiarism was as relevant as any issue could be for an academic engaged in writing and research. Identifying the parameters of plagiarism was not only interesting, it was compelling. Nevertheless, leaders from the Faculty Senate and local AAUP declined to participate claiming it was not the right time to press this kind of issue. University President Shelby Thames had recently “fired” two tenured professors—or, depending on the source, he allowed them to retire—and the Faculty Senate and local AAUP were still reeling from that experience.

As a courtesy, colleagues copied then-President Thames and Provost Jay Grimes on written communications. (They later advised USM President Martha Saunders, recently “retired” or was fired, depending on the source.) Nevertheless, Dean Doty and the

Accreditation Committee were again asked to participate in a dialogue to discuss the copied “Guidelines” and to identify the parameters of plagiarism, but they did not respond. Regardless, colleagues continued to keep them informed...