

## **“Eyes Wide Shut”: Crockett’s 2005 Speech on AACSB**

In February of 2005, one of the CoB’s faculty senators, accounting professor James Crockett, stood up in the faculty senate and delivered the following speech:

In the interest of full disclosure I will preface my remarks by saying that I am far from a distant observer regarding the recent events in the College of Business. I spent 10 years of my professional life securing AACSB Accounting Accreditation which is closely linked to and dependent on AACSB Business Accreditation. It appears that my efforts and the efforts of my colleagues to secure these two prestigious accreditations are slowly being negated by an administration that, to say the least, sends mixed messages regarding accreditation issues. I will attempt to be brief and address the AACSB related issues in Provost Grimes February 3rd letter to Dean Doty and Dean Doty’s February 4th response to Dr. Grimes.

In referring to the proposed hybrid MBA program, Grimes wrote, “You [Doty] responded that your faculty were working on an alternative delivery or hybrid program and hope for a pilot program for fall 2005. However, when questioned, you would not promise delivery of such a program by fall 2005. I informed you that we must have it by then.” Doty’s letter succinctly addressed his concerns about rushing the program. “My review of current AACSB literature leads me believe that following Grimes’ instruction would put the CoB in violation of AACSB guidelines on strategic planning and guidelines concerning control autonomy of the business programs. In discussing the programs it will review, AACSB emphasizes control and autonomy as follows: The level of influence the faculty and administrators of included programs have over the program in such areas as program design; faculty hiring, development, and promotion; student selection and services; curriculum design; and awarding of degrees. When the leadership [re: dean] of included programs influences these features of a program, the program will be included. [That is, the program will be reviewed.] This is to say that the proposed MBA program will be reviewed by AACSB accreditation however it’s done. It’s implicit that any academic program that comes under the Business School must actually be controlled by the Business dean and the Business faculty.”

Grimes also wrote, “I remind you that we are not a PhD granting College of Business and as such should not be concerned with theoretical/basic research. Instead our focus should be on applied research, research that is of interest to our regional and local customers.” Doty’s letter more than adequately addresses his concerns about this statement: “My review of AACSB materials and my personal experience with AACSB lead me to conclude that Dr. Grimes’ position is at odds with AACSB requirements for any school that has a business graduate program. One of AACSB’s strategic management standards reads, ‘The school’s mission statement is appropriate to higher education for management and consonant with the mission of any institution of which the school is a part. The mission includes the production of intellectual contributions that advance the knowledge and practice of business and management.’ As an example of how this requirement might be included in a mission statement, the AACSB suggests: ‘The school will lead management thought through basic scholarly research that contributes original knowledge and theory in management disciplines.’”

The concerns that Dean Doty expressed in his letter about the credentials of anyone serving as chair of Tourism Management are legitimate from a AACSB accreditation perspective. My experience is that the AACSB visitation team are very much concerned about the academic qualifications and professional background of those in leadership positions. Doty’s concern about the administration over-riding recommendations made by him, the department and the faculty in rejecting a chair candidate also are legitimate because AACSB expects that input from deans and faculty will weigh heavily in such decisions. Dean Doty’s comments about how any major changes to the MBA program should go through a very deliberative process are in accord with AACSB guidelines on strategic planning and curriculum and delivery decisions. AACSB guidelines require extensive input in such changes by the faculty and that the Business dean provide leadership in the process.

Two other observations: The local newspaper quoted Provost Grimes as, in essence, saying that Doty is always throwing up accreditation issues as road blocks to progress. Doty is well-versed in accreditation standards and their implications for the college and university. For him to ignore accreditation requirements would not only be unprofessional but irresponsible and unethical. Finally, President Thames wrote a memo to Dean Doty today supporting the dean's position on the development of the MBA program and on research. Thames' position is in direct contradiction to the views expressed in writing by the provost. How can a dean or a college function in such an administrative environment?

Thank you.

Crockett's 02/2005 speech in the faculty senate clearly concentrated on the issue of AACSB accreditation in the CoB, focusing on the Grimes-Doty correspondence of 2/3 and 2/4 that same month. The benefit of hindsight, especially given the CoB's AACSB probation of 02/2007, provides a fresh look at Crockett's AACSB speech from two years ago. We have asked guest columnist Duane Cobb to provide that fresh look for our readers.

### **Commentary by Duane Cobb**

It's not often we get the opportunity to look back on the views of former CoB administrators and apply them to the test of time. As far as those go, this is a gem of an opportunity, and one we'll handle one paragraph at a time, beginning with paragraph two.

Crockett speaks about Doty's views on faculty control without mentioning how little faculty control Doty actually allows. The two-part series on the new centralized hiring process in the CoB that was recently published by USMPRIDE.COM shows quite the opposite – that Doty is micromanaging the hiring process in both the SAIS, the School Crockett supposedly loves, and the EFIB. Are we to believe that Crockett is thrilled that Management and Marketing chair Barry Babin is single-handedly running the search for the next SAIS Director? Hardly. From what is being said about how badly the recent AACSB Peer Review team visit went for the SAIS, it appears as though Crockett may have “loved the SAIS to death.”

Crockett lauds Doty's “personal experience with AACSB” (Doty's own words) as if it were all true. I'm sure if we asked AACSB about its personal experience with Harold Doty, they would describe it much the same way as Sean Penn would describe his personal experience with the paparazzi. Even the CoB's own AACSB consultant, Dr. Karen Ann Tarnoff of East Tennessee State University, displayed enough non-verbals during her 19 January 2007 Assurance of Learning (AOL) presentation to suggest that she doesn't much care for Doty.

New reports surfacing at USMPRIDE.COM show that the Tourism Management chair, Cheri Becker, does next to nothing on an annual basis – little teaching, little to no scholarship, etc. There can't be much doubt that, on balance, her dossier harmed the CoB's position with respect to re-accreditation. It's quite possible that Thames et al. were on point in opposing her selection (by Doty) for chair of TM.

Doty was deliberate in putting the MBA courses online. He deliberately ignored CoB traditions and voted as ex-officio on the CoB's Graduate Programs committee. Ex-officio voting is now *the tradition* in the CoB, given Doty's use of Barry Babin's ex-officio vote on the GP committee – a position Babin reportedly “volunteered” for. Of course, the latest tradition in the CoB is the “re-vote,” a key feature in Doty's deliberate process of digitalizing the MBA program (into oblivion, some say).

“Doty is well-versed in accreditation standards and their implications for the college and university.” With that, Crockett wins the USMPRIDE.COM award for being the least observant professor in the whole CoB. When it all comes down to it, Thames and Grimes hardly had anything to do with the CoB's inability to produce a clean re-accreditation result. That failure rests squarely on the shoulders of CoB Dean Harold Doty. Dean Doty is well-versed in failure. CoB faculty are becoming well-versed in the implications of that for the college and university. That's simply my observation.