

George Carter on Subjective Evaluation

EFIB Chair George Carter leaves no opening for surprise. It's one misstep after another, one fly in the ointment followed by two more. The latest gaffe comes from the 4 May 2007 CoB faculty meeting, wherein Carter expressed his views on subjective grading of CoB students, as part of a conversation with CoB Associate Dean Joseph Peyrefitte, assistant professor of finance Sean Salter, and the CoB's Assurance of Learning Coordinator Donna Davis:

- Peyrefitte:** ". . . I think it would be a great idea if we [the CoB] could satisfy SACS and AACSB [guidelines] together . . . That's what I've done myself. I grade using my 'rubrics' and I transfer them to my class grades, and then I have data for AACSB and SACS ready to go . . ."
- Davis:** ". . . whenever you make your grading key or whatever, then you can use that . . ."
- Salter:** ". . . Karen Tarnoff talked about . . . hand[ing] it [your rubric] out to your students and say 'This is how I'm going to grade you.' . . . And then you use that rubric to grade. Is it fair to then subjectively adjust the grades afterward? How do SACS and AACSB feel about that?"
- Davis:** "It's not grades. For SACS and AACSB . . . that's not grades."
- Peyrefitte:** "They [SACS and AACSB] don't care about grades. They just want you to rate them [students] on the number of items that you're grading them [students] on."
- Salter:** "I guess what I'm saying is if I use a rubric is it then appropriate to go back and subjectively adjust after the fact?"
- Davis:** "Yeah."
- Salter:** "So I use the rubric to grade this term paper, and it says that the student should have gotten a B, but then I say 'But no, they really should have a C.'"
- Davis:** "Well, for us [CoB faculty] we can say they got a B based on maybe how they did on the rubric . . . *but* based on a review of what they did with regard to what we expected or what nationwide we might expect that to be, we can say that they got . . . a B but really they're 'only in the middle' [a C] . . ."
- Salter:** "So, it [the rubric] doesn't affect their [students'] well-being in the course?"
- Davis:** "No, no, no . . ."
- Carter:** "If you are gonna say 'this is the way I'm gonna grade you as part of the course,' then you have to grade that way. If you want to include a subjective component, and you include a subjective component and use a subjective component, then

you've graded the way you said you would. But to say "I'm going to grade according this rubric," and then deviate from that because you don't like the way the rubric came out is going to present difficulties . . ."

How Did Carter "Grade" EFIB Faculty?

USMNEWS.NET is fortunate to have a copy of Franklin Mixon's complaint against Carter's misuse of authority regarding Mixon's 2006 Annual Evaluation (see below). Here, we will juxtapose

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"Annual evaluations cover the performance of a faculty member over a three year period." CoB Faculty Handbook, page 4.

NARRATIVE REPORT OF RESULTS OF ANNUAL EVALUATION

Teaching: 3.25 – A faculty member who students recognize as a very competent teacher.

Calendar Year 2005 Teaching Evaluation: 4.00

Calendar Year 2004 Teaching Evaluation: 4.00

Carter's quote above with how Carter evaluated Mixon's teaching in the EFIB. Notice that Carter sets up some teaching quality rubrics, and then proceeds to measure Mixon's teaching performance against them (see below).

The EFIB department is first and foremost a teaching/learning environment. Thus, the student evaluations over five dimensions (Overall Instructor, Overall Course, Learning, Effectiveness of Instructor, and Effectiveness of Course) are the primary bases for the Teaching evaluation. This instructor's average undergraduate ratio on these dimensions relative to the EFIB department is $(1.07+1.01+1.08)/3=1.05$.

There are 15 EFIB instructors evaluated by this evaluator this evaluation period. The mean instructor average undergraduate ratio of these 15 EFIB instructors was 0.99 with a standard deviation of 0.09. Normalizing this instructor's 1.05 yields a z-score of $[(1.05 - 0.99)/0.09] = +0.67$. EFIB instructors consistently have been in the "very competent" to "clearly superior": evaluation range 3.00-5.00. Thus, fitting this instructor's z-score to that range $[4.00 + (z\text{-score}/3 \text{ standard deviations})]$ yields a base evaluation of $[4.00 + (+0.67/3)] = 4.22$.

There are other objective and subjective dimensions that collectively and subjectively factor into the objective teaching evaluations stated above. They include, but are not limited to, consistency with program and course objectives, undergraduate course rigor $[(1.29+1.60+1.31)/3]=1.40$, graduate instruction dimensions (including course rigor: 1.00), collegiality, teaching enhancements such as in-depth evaluation and unique student learning experiences, and commitment to department teaching goals and obligations.

This instructor has an average undergraduate course rigor ratio of 1.40. The mean instructor average undergraduate rigor ratio of the 15 EFIB instructors was 1.28 with a standard deviation of 0.98. Normalizing this instructor's 1.40 yields a z-score of $[(1.40 - 1.28)/0.98] = +0.12$.

This instructor is clearly an effective classroom teacher who maintains adequate rigor.

According to Carter's rubrics, Mixon "is clearly an effective classroom teacher who maintains adequate rigor." Not only that, Carter's rubrics indicate that Mixon should receive a rating of 4.22 (out of 5) for his 2007 teaching rating.

Unfortunately for Mixon, Carter did not like the way the rubrics "came out." Thus, Carter's evaluation of Mixon's teaching continues:

Unfortunately, this instructor was uncollegial outside the classroom and resistant to administration of the teaching/learning environment. A particular instance is a faculty member became ill and left the university in Fall 2006. His class had to be assumed by another faculty member so this chair assigned the class to Professor Mixon as the only under-loaded faculty member. Professor Mixon resisted this assignment, though it was necessary, and grieved the assignment. In his grievance, he denigrated his own degree by saying that he could not teach a survey MBA international economics course. He tried to assign the course to other faculty members, one of whom was already teaching an overload course at another USM campus. Professor Mixon cast aspersions on another faculty member for being a friend of the ill faculty member and not taking the course. Professor Mixon's hostility adversely affected the teaching/learning environment. Consequently, the base evaluation from student evaluations is subjectively adjusted to 3.25.

Because Carter did not like the rubric-based rating of 4.22, he "subjectively adjusted" Mixon's teaching rating down a point, to 3.25.

What's the Deal with George Carter?

Of course, Carter's quote above (in blue), not Davis' "Yeah," is a proper response to the questions raised at the 4 May 2007 meeting, but because Carter can't follow his own stated "ethical standards" his evaluation of Mixon's teaching (and that of others) may "present" Carter some "difficulties" in the near future.

Reporter's Note: Sources tell USMNEWS.NET that Carter introduced neither the teaching rubrics nor the teaching subjectives to the EFIB faculty *before* the evaluation period (2006) began. Thus, Carter's evaluations of EFIB faculty violated virtually every conceivable standard of fair grading practices.