

Heroes and Storytellers

In a recent usmnews.net report, readers were treated to some of Management Professor Stephen Bushardt's views on rewards, specifically the Hero/Storyteller Culture. This columnist began thinking about exactly who the Heroes and Storytellers currently are in the CoB and who might be next. Remember that Heroes aren't really heroes; they are simply the individuals who are the poster children for how the corrupt Bushardtian Establishment wants things done. As a word of note, there is a third category added – Hybrid – that denotes individuals who are used in different situations at different times. What follows is a best guess list for each category.

SAIS Heroes

These are easy –

Chang-Tseh Hsieh is the only MIS Hero by virtue of his “invaluable” research and McCarty Professorship. Hsieh, whose classroom skills are legendarily poor, gets a pass because he's the closest thing MIS has to a Hero and because his vote is for sale in any situation.

The Accounting Heroes are easy to spot: Charles Jordan and Stan Clark. Both are reputed to do a good job in the classroom, and both have been heavily rewarded for their research, paltry though it may be. New arrivals to the CoB are inevitably told that Jordan and Clark are the only real scholars in SAIS (ignoring, of course, Marc DePree's extensive A- and B-level publications for Jordan and Clark's mostly C-level works). Jordan regularly holds the Morgan Professorship, and Clark's due for a turn.

SAIS Storyteller

There's really only a need for one Storyteller per department, and Rod Posey is it for SAIS. Want a story about the 1970's Accounting Department? Listen to Rod. Want a story about Dean Greene? Listen to Rod. Want one about Jerry Morgan? Listen to Rod. Don't know about what a great man Jim Crockett is? Just ask Rod. Posey's been around since dirt was new, and he plays his role well. He's not a Hero – even with his 100 articles – but he sure can tell a story.

EFIB Heroes

These are also easy –

George Carter and Ed Nissan are the Economics Heroes. As self-proclaimed “Big Time” researchers, Carter and Nissan collaborate on paper after paper, none of which ever reach a quality journal. Still, they are held up as esteemed colleagues. Carter's bureaucratic abilities and Nissan's charm make them the obvious duo, correct? In reality, Carter's Heroic reputation (built on his military record and administrator background) allows him to operate as an administrator and given him status in the community, while Nissan's Hero title (supported by Brandt Awards) allows Carter and others to dispense extra-large

raises to the CoB's oldest full-time faculty member. Since John Lambert is the only IB faculty member – and he's a Visiting Assistant – there are no IB Heroes.

EFIB Storyteller

It's Charles Sawyer, hands down. From Carter's bureaucratic brilliance to Niroomand's silent stiletto-like reach to Black's doomed deanship, Sawyer can spin a yarn like an Eastern-religion Guru. In his false-whisper "hallway" voice, Sawyer has spent many hours instructing new faculty on the virtues of not taking a stand, of following the leader, and of waiting your turn, and Sawyer's living proof – he's never taken a stand on anything at any time or on any issue – that it pays. Lately, he's also turned out to be the long arm of Carter as EFIB chairman when the chips are down.

Management and Marketing Heroes

These are even easier – John Carr from Management and Barry Babin from Marketing. Carr is the CoB's grant king – or so the Storytellers would have you believe. Truth is, Carr's grant involvement brings little overhead into the University, and he's usually a worker bee on some other Queen Bee's grants. Babin, who has long fancied himself the CoB's best researcher, doesn't even clearly have the best marketing vita in the building, especially if one discounts the publications in the journals he edits. Give Carr the title of Mr. Grant and Babin the title of Mr. Brandt, and – poof – you've got two Heroes.

Management and Marketing Storyteller

The man himself – Stephen Bushardt is the only name to know – after all, he wrote the book, or, literally, the essay, upon which the system is based. Living out in Canebrake with Carter, Black, Doty, Babin, and others, Bushardt has plenty of Guru status of his own, though it's almost entirely misguided. Silently moving from one group of powerbrokers to another, Bushardt looks like the epitome of professorial status – beard, bowtie, slouch hat, and all. Who takes all new assistant professors to lunch, without fail? Bushardt. Start 'em off early, and they'll never doubt your stories.

USMGC Storyteller

While there aren't any USMGC Heroes – simply because USMGC has consistently hired sub-par talent, especially under Gunther and Doty, USMGC does have a Storyteller: Beth LaFleur. LaFleur, however, isn't the typical Storyteller. Sure, she can talk about Joe Greene, Tom Ivy, and the old guard, but her primary purpose is to act as a cheerleader (notice the hairdo?) for Harold Doty. LaFleur makes sure that everyone knows just how much Doty values the Coast Campus faculty, and she makes sure they toe the line when it comes to loyalty. In some sense, she's half Storyteller, half Whip.

The Hybrids

There are three Hybrids in the CoB – those who can fill the role of Hero or Storyteller, depending on the need at the time. These are Farhang Niroomand, John Clark, and Alvin Williams. Niroomand, a longtime CoBer, has Hero status because of his long service as Associate Dean and his editorship of some journal you’ve never heard of, but Niroomand can also be a Storyteller when needed, pulling faculty aside to remind them of their place in the organization and playing one party against another. Likewise, John Clark is the Hero of the finance group because of his formerly prolific (but now petering out) research stream, though he seems to be doing a lot more Storytelling these days. Finally, Alvin Williams, longtime Chair of Marketing and Finance/Marketing and Management and current Kaetsu Chairholder, is a Hero who can spin a yarn about how Dean Greene conveyed tenure to him with a passing comment in the hallway and a pat on the back – how’s that for a Storyteller as well!

The reader may ask “How did Stephen Bushardt figure out the CoB culture so long ago?” The answer is simple. He didn’t. He helped make it this way. He, along with a cabal of administrators and self-serving faculty, created a culture that they have systematically cultivated through calculated hiring practices. Long ago, they found out that if they hired weak candidates and/or candidates who were in a tight spot, they’d be able to assimilate those candidates into the Hero/Storyteller culture with ease. After all, what recipient of a negative tenure vote at another university would rock the boat the second time around? What married couple who are both employed at USM would buck the system? What candidate with several children and a stay-at-home wife can afford to be unemployed because of a stand on principle? And so Bushardt and the others have created their dream scenario. Or so they thought.