

Is Carter an Economist, a Statistician, an Ethicist, or None of the Above?

A recent report at usmpride.com titled “CoBscam? A Look at Questionable Teaching Schedules in the College of Business” uncovered a significant fact. Professor of Economics George Carter isn’t teaching a single economics course in the 2006-07 academic year. In Fall 2006, Carter currently teaches two sections of BA 301 – Managerial Statistics I. In Spring 2007, Carter again assigned himself two sections of BA 301 PLUS an “overload” section of BA 301.

Previous reports at usmpride.com indicate that Carter’s terminal degree is in economics, yet Carter regularly teaches courses in statistics and ethics. Other extant reports at usmpride.com illustrate Carter’s utter lack of expertise in ethics, while still other reports question his qualifications to teach statistics. Carter has said for years that, “anyone with a Ph.D. in business can teach statistics;” however, when Tom Lindley and his “buddies” (thanks to Mark Klinedinst for that gem) began to look into the feasibility of spreading the CoB’s statistics teaching duties across departments (rather than concentrating them in economics), Carter balked. Apparently all business Ph.D.s should be able to teach statistics, but economics Ph.D.s are more able than marketing, management, finance, or accounting Ph.D.s are. Maybe Carter really does possess more statistics expertise than, say, Barry Babin (see the “Babin Textbook Factory” report for more information).

Maybe Carter’s self-assignment of only statistics courses for the 2006-07 school year really is just an attempt to retain control over the little fiefdom he and some other economists have built over the course of 25 years. There could be another explanation, however. An alternative explanation could be that George Carter is an incompetent economist. For many years, Carter taught Principles of Economics I (ECO 201 – which is commonly referred to as Principles of Macroeconomics at other schools). In teaching that course, Carter gained a reputation with students as a hack, spending more time on current events issues from the *Hattiesburg American* newspaper (Who needs to use the *Wall Street Journal* when you’ve got the *American* right her in our town?) without bothering to link those current events to economics at all. Further, Carter could be counted on to deliver a number of lectures each semester directing students on “How to live your life,” a speech that has recently been aimed at a number of relatively young EFIB faculty.

Carter even gained a reputation for economics incompetence with other economics faculty. This writer overheard Professor of Economics Charles Sawyer lecturing a young EFIB faculty member on why Carter needed to get out of the

economics classroom and into a full-time statistics teaching role. Given Sawyer's gadfly reputation vis-à-vis CoB Associate Dean Farhang Niroomand, there is little doubt in this writer's mind that Sawyer pushed the "Carter to stats" agenda with Niroomand, who pressed Carter out of economics and into statistics. It would not be surprising, then, that Carter's visceral reactions regarding statistics have ensued: Carter has staked his claim over statistics courses by assigning himself those courses and made his infamous AACSB/Minitab proclamation.

Lest you think this theory is far-fetched, consider this: while statistics have historically not been the strong suit of CoB graduates, students' skills were notably better when Frank Whitesell and Jennifer Caveny were handling the bulk of the statistics courses. There has been a significant drop off in students' learning of statistics since Carter assumed his prominent role in the administration of statistics courses. Carter is a simple "button man" who only pushes the buttons he is told to push by his superiors (Niroomand in particular). It stands to reason, then, that getting Carter out of economics classes wasn't Carter's idea (although he may have been allowed to believe it was), and that Carter is so robotic that he is even willing to "demote" himself at the behest of his superiors.

If, as has been demonstrated in multiple reports at usmpride.com, Carter is ill-suited to teach ethics, economics, and statistics, why is he retained on the faculty at USM?