

One Dirty Business

UNCOVERED DETAILS OF THE HUDSON-TO-ASU STORY

The 2-Mar-2012 [hiring of](#) Tim Hudson to be the new (second) chancellor of Arkansas State University is a hot topic in several locations. This report pieces together what appears to be a sketchy history that has landed Hudson in Jonesboro. In piecing this history together, this report moves in chronological order.

Chapter 1 – After many years on the faculty at USM, part of which was spent developing what many believe is [a shoddy graduate program](#) in economic development, and then subsequently serving as dean of a college that arguably [existed only](#) to support him and this program, Tim Hudson is chosen in 2002 by new USM president Shelby Thames as USM provost.

Chapter 2 – Hudson goes on serve [in one of](#) the most [controversial central administrations](#) in the history of USM. The Shelby Thames administration [moved to fire](#) renowned English scholar Gary Stringer and USM sociologist Frank Glamser [after they](#) assisted the USM chapter [of the AAUP](#) in [an investigation](#) of Thames' vice president for research, Angeline Godwin Dvorak. Dvorak (now Godwin) claimed to have served on the English faculty at the University of Kentucky, [which the](#) investigation proved to be a false claim. After Thames [moved to](#) fire the two professors, the campus voted overwhelmingly for “no confidence” [in the](#) Thames administration. Hudson never protested, at least not publicly, what the administration he worked for was doing during this time. As such, he was a *de-facto* supporter of its activities in this regard.

Chapter 3 – Despite the ongoing turmoil at USM involving the Thames administration, Hudson [is named](#) president of the University of Houston-Victoria in Aug-2004. Meanwhile, shortly after Hudson is named UH-V president, Thomas Meredith becomes the new Mississippi IHL commissioner. This happens in the midst of the scandals afflicting USM. Rumors swirl that Hudson befriends Meredith and, perhaps in an effort to rebuild his reputation in Mississippi, secretly provides him with documents detrimental to Thames and other high-level administrators at USM. Lastly, shortly after assuming the IHL post, Meredith introduces Mississippians to [one of the hallmarks](#) of his higher education administration philosophy – “secret searches” for university presidents. Meredith argues that this practice protects candidates from backlash from their current employers.

Chapter 4 – Meredith's career as the Mississippi IHL commissioner ends in 2008, after being [disgraced](#) by his decision to have physical plant employees from Mississippi State University come to his residence in Jackson in order to do [work around](#) his home there. That scandal (“landscapegate”) also cost Vance Watson his job as acting president of MSU. The personal services provided to Meredith by state employees were estimated at well beyond \$10,000. About two years later, in Aug-2010, and in a mysterious turn of events, Hudson's contract as UH-V president [is not renewed](#) by UH-System chancellor and president, Renu Khator. Rumors swirl that Hudson, and former CoB associate business college dean Farhang Niroomand – the former USM administrator and long-time friend of Hudson [who was brought to](#) UH-V in 2009 by Hudson – misspent thousands of dollars on foreign travel. Khator [creates a new](#) UH-System post for Hudson [to occupy under](#) her watchful eye.

Chapter 5 – In the fall of 2010, the Arkansas State University System [initiates a search](#) for a new president. To assist in its search, the ASU-System [board of trustees hired](#) Effective Leadership, LLC, an executive search firm out of Mississippi. This firm is owned by Thomas Meredith, the former Mississippi IHL commissioner. Meredith's fee for services was \$45,000, and combined with up to \$10,000 in expenses to create a bill for \$55,000. These costs generate substantial backlash in Arkansas. Things heat up even more when [Meredith resurrects his](#) “secret search” practice. Many journalists in the state claim that Meredith's search practices violate Arkansas' open records laws, which they point [out are](#) much better (pro openness) than those in Mississippi, where Meredith previously worked as IHL commissioner. At issue then was review

of the search committee's notes and work product. Meredith's defense against making these notes open to the media generated even more of a firestorm. Meredith claimed that some committee members may have noted something disparaging about a candidate's race, gender or religion, or committed libel in their review of the candidates. Journalists responded that the public has a right to know if bigots and those not averse to committing libel are being used to find university system presidents in the state.

Chapter 6 – Charles Welch [is selected as](#) the ASU-System president [on 9-Nov-2010](#). He came to the ASU-System from Henderson State University (AR), where he had served as president. Welch's application for the ASU-System presidency arrived on the day that the three finalists for the position were chosen by the ASU-System trustees (i.e., Welch's application arrived at the proverbial 11th hour). In [a move](#) that shocked many in Arkansas, Welch was among the three finalists even though his application/c.v. had just arrived. Much of the state then knew Welch would soon be named ASU-System president.

Chapter 7 – In July-2011, Hudson [is named a](#) new vice chancellor of Texas Tech University. Shortly thereafter, Arkansas State University initiates a search for a new chancellor.

Chapter 8 – An anonymous poster visits the message board administered by the USM chapter of the AAUP in early 2012 [and reports that](#) Tim Hudson's name was added to the list of finalists for the ASU chancellor post by the System president Charles Welch. This act parallels how Welch became a finalist back in 2010 for his current position. At about the same time, *The Jonesboro Sun's* editor emeritus Roy Ockert [reports that](#), among Hudson's advantageous experiences in seeking presidential posts all over the country, ASU-System president Charles Welch gave Hudson an artificial advantage by having Hudson's presentation held in the more intimate Cooper Alumni Center instead of the colder and more expansive Reng Student Center auditorium, where other finalists' talks were held. According to Ockert, Hudson connected better with the audience than did the others, no doubt as a result of the venue selection from Welch. Ockert went on to predict a Hudson victory.

Chapter 9 – Hudson [is selected to lead ASU](#) (2-Mar-2012) by Charles Welch, the president of the ASU System. The ASU Board of Trustees approved the selection, and Hudson signs a 3-year contract at an annual salary of \$275,000.

USMNEWS.net readers are invited to write the summary of this novel. Saying something about the Meredith-Welch-Hudson link might be necessary.