

Point/Counterpoint

Should the CoB's Annual Evaluation Process be Open?

DePree's Point

It's well known throughout the CoB that accounting professor Marc DePree is in favor of faculty vitae being made public. What may not be known to readers of *usmnews.net* who live outside of Mississippi, however, is that in a college-wide faculty meeting DePree asked then-CBA Dean William Gunther why the college's administration would not allow a "faculty representative" to sit in on the college's annual evaluation of faculty meeting. At that time, the college's annual evaluation of faculty process was more inclusive than it is today, consisting of a meeting of the entire management team of the college, with a checks-and-balances discussion (of credentials) of sorts. Now, with the 8-Dec-06 proposal from management professor Stephen Bushardt, the CoB's annual evaluations are conducted by each department's faculty governance committee, which is usually the chair.

Having seen some of the CoB's worst abuses (e.g., the Marvin Albin double-counting of research scandal), DePree believes that allowing some faculty oversight in the annual evaluation of faculty process will add a measure of confidence and trust not heretofore seen in USM's business school. Though DePree did not bring up a mechanism for allowing faculty participation (you will see why in the Counterpoint), one can easily envision a process wherein one faculty is elected by their colleagues to observe the business college's annual evaluation conference. Such a move would be considered bold, providing more bottom-up respect for the CoB's administration.

Gunther's Counterpoint

Former CBA Dean William Gunther's response to DePree's question revealed quite a bit about the way the college's administrators view the evaluation (and other) process(es). In that same college-wide faculty meeting, Gunther answered DePree's question with his own question: What's to stop us (the management team) from "capturing" that faculty member (who sits in on the evaluation meeting)? To explain what he meant by "capturing," Gunther described the economics theory about capturing regulators to the assembled faculty, and suggested to DePree and others that the management team could simply "capture" the faculty observer by giving him/her additional benefits in return from his/her public seal of approval of the evaluation process that he/she had just observed.

Gunther's response was not only a negative one, it revealed to DePree and those assembled just what the CoB's administrators think about merit raises – they (merit raises) are useful in buying goodwill and compliance from reward-seeking faculty. Since that day, no faculty member in the CoB has suggested anything similar to the idea that DePree brought up, and that Gunther deflected, in an open meeting of the sort that DePree's question was raised. Not only that, the CoB's annual evaluation process no longer (as of spring 2007) involves the *administrative oversight* it once did. Now, three or four department chairs sit in solitary confinement to decide on annual merit raises. Now, "capture" is the last thing on their minds.
