

"Professor of Regional Economics and Economics Education"? The Hits Just Keep on Comin'

To the outside world, EFIB chair George Carter is a "professor of regional economics and economics education." At least that is what Carter told Lauren Moak, the reporter for *The Student Printz* who interviewed Carter and others for *TSP's* [18-Sept-08 article](#), "Economic woes plague country." The portion of Moak's report containing quotes and comments from Carter is inserted below:

George Carter, professor of regional economics and economics education at USM, said that the issue emerged at the bottom with mortgage lenders giving loans to people with no possible way of ever repaying their debt, which is a totally unethical practice that should be unacceptable. The Federal Reserve backs pseudo-government organizations such as Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and Sallie Mae.

"In the 1980's the savings and loan industry went through a similar situation from selling stock and bonds and it took a few years for the country got through the crisis, but the 1990's was the most successful decade for any country economically," Carter said.

As indicated above, Carter is referred to by Moak as "professor of regional economics and economics education," a phrase that Moak would have put together only through Carter's own words (use of the terms). Interestingly, in describing himself, Carter chose two areas that are not present *anywhere* in the CoB's menu of economics courses. In other words, there are no CoB classes in either regional economics or economics education. As such, Carter's presence in the CoB and his \$130,000 per year salary are barely, if at all, justifiable, if one's takes his own words to heart.



George Carter

Sources also tell USMNEWS.net that Carter does not even hold any *real* credentials in the latter area -- economics education. In fact, if sources are accurate the only credible economics education scholars that the CoB has had in recent years -- three of which are Melody Lo, Franklin Mixon and Sunny Wong --

are all gone now.¹ When these three former CoB economists were all on board the CoB, which was from about 2002-2006, USM's economics department was ranked among the top 100 in the world in terms of economics education. That highlight was praised extensively in the Fall 2005 issue of *Joint Venture*, the CoB's affinity magazine.² The section of the Fall 2005 issue of *JV* containing this praise is inserted below:

Southern Miss ranks in top 100 for econ education research

New book delivers varied insights on economic education

A recently published study of economic education research productivity ranks The University of Southern Mississippi's economics department in the top 100 of universities worldwide.

Southern Miss is tied for 86th with Boston University and Florida State University, among others, in the study that ranked 416 institutions based on their economics department contributions to the *Journal of Economic Education* (JEE), a leading economics education journal.



Mixon

Vanderbilt University in Nashville is the top-ranked school in the study based on the number of articles published, followed by the University of Nebraska and Purdue University.

Melody Lo and Sunny Wong, both assistant professors of economics at Southern Miss, authored the study "Ranking Institutions Based on Economic Education Scholarship," that is included in a new book, *Shaping the Learning Curve: Essays on Economic Education* edited by Frank Mixon, professor of economics at Southern Miss.

The researchers examined more than 950 articles published in 114 issues of the JEE starting from the first issue in 1969 and ending with the third issue of the 35th volume in 2004. They computed rankings based on the number of articles published as well as the number of pages devoted to the articles.

According to Lo and Wong, this study constructs a new ranking of economics departments worldwide based on the department's contributions to knowledge about teaching economics.

"We use the research contribution to economic education literature as a proxy for teaching innovation (in economics). Much of the research in economic education is related to the effectiveness and innovations in economic teaching. As such, we assume that schools with greater contributions to the economic education literature have a comparative advantage in teaching economics," said Lo and Wong in their study.

The Lo-Wong study is one of 11 chapters in the book that is published by iUniverse. Four other chapters are also authored by Southern Miss professors, including Mixon. The book is targeted to teachers at the high school and collegiate level and is divided into three sections: research, teaching and content, and the sociology of economic education. Other Southern Miss authors and their chapters include the following:

- "Have You Seen the New Econ Prof? Beauty, Teaching, and Occupational Choice in Higher Education" by Trellis Green, Mixon and Len Trevino (Washington State University)
- "Teaching Economic Development as a Part of International Economics: A Survey of Methods and a Suggested Pedagogy" by W. Charles Sawyer and Richard L. Sprinkle (University of Texas-El Paso)
- "Intraindustry Trade: A More Intuitive Metric" by H. Tyrone Black
- "Bracketology 101: Using Sports to Apply Probabilistic Concepts from Elementary Econometrics" by Mixon and Michael Withers (Mississippi State University)

"We have individuals in the field at Southern Miss who have added to what we know about the delivery of economic education. They have been productive in researching methods of teaching and ideas to improve instruction in economics," said Mixon, who also serves on the board of editors for the *Journal of Economics and Finance Education*.

"In the past several years, the scholarship of teaching economics has become more of a focus in the discipline and our college economists have stayed current with this trend. The level of expertise we have in the College of Business is a contributing factor in our recent launch of the Center for Economic Education," said Harold Dory, dean.



College of Business

¹ Lo is now at the University of Texas at San Antonio, while Mixon and Wong are now affiliated with Auburn University and the University of San Francisco, respectively.

² *JV* was developed during the William Gunther administration of USM's business school. The Gunther administration ran from 1998 to 2003.

As the insert above indicates, near its peak the CoB's ECO/IB group was heavily involved in the area of economics education, including, in addition to Lo et al., Tyrone Black, Trellis Green, Charles Sawyer and Len Trevino. Since those days, Black, Sawyer and Trevino have all departed, leaving only Green behind from the original group of seven.³ Interestingly, four of the five former economics education scholars who have departed the CoB for other institutions in recent years have gone on to Tier II universities (*U.S. News & World Report's America's Best Colleges 2009*). These are Mixon, Sawyer, Trevino and Wong. And, sources say most of these faced various degrees of hardship at the hands of CoB administrators, such as Carter, former CoB dean Harold Doty and former CoB associate dean Farhang Niroomand.



Harold Doty



Farhang Niroomand

By the time most of the faculty listed above had departed the CoB, Doty had set up a Center for Economic Education. Carter was not selected to become the director of that Center, or even to be a part of it in any real way. Instead, Carter presided over the selection of Susan Doty, wife of then-dean Harold Doty, to lead the CEE.



Susan Doty



Harold Doty

Not only does Susan Doty not hold the usual economics education credentials, such as having published a book or articles in the field, as did the seven faculty

³ Black has since entered retirement, while Sawyer and Trevino are now with Texas Christian University and Washington State University, respectively.

who departed EFIB, she does not hold a PhD in economics, or even a master's degree in ECO.

Sources say that, with the imaginary title of "professor of economics education," Carter may be trying to re-position himself in the new, Lance Nail-led College of Business at USM. Carter may even be thinking about moving into the CEE in some capacity, perhaps in anticipation of being "canned" (to use Carter's own term) as EFIB chair by Nail. Whatever the reason for using it, the title of "professor of economics education" seems to be one that exists only in Carter's mind.

All of this leaves us with the other self-anointed title, that of "professor of regional economics." Sources tell USMNEWS.net that what publishing Carter has done has generally been in the field of regional economics, or at least "regional studies." However, as reports here at USMNEWS.net have shown, Carter's academic work has exhibited what appears to be an excessive degree of slipstreaming. One report in particular, which is entitled [Local Brew](#), contains information that points towards the idea that Carter owes the entire research portion of his academic career to fellow EFIB economist Edward Nissan.

All in all, Carter's use of the title "Professor of Regional Economics and Economics Education" is the kind of "out of turn" behavior that may eventually get Nail and the CoB in a hole neither can get out of. To think that this viewpoint column paints such a picture without even delving into Carter's other statement to Moak, that mortgage lenders have been participating in the unethical practice of making loans to borrowers who lack the ability to repay them, should be enough to scare any new administrator. Long-time readers of USMNEWS.net do not need not be cautioned about Carter's behavior -- we know that there is an [entire division](#) here at USMNEWS.net devoted to what many characterize as Carter's unethical practices over the years.