

Public Service Announcement, 12-July-2008

If you are considering new employment as a faculty member in USM's College of Business Administration, this PSA could easily be one of the most important notices you read in your professional life. There are enough "bad practices" that routinely occur in USM's CoB to threaten your academic career should you choose employment there. Any one of these could step out and bite you, and at any moment. But, there is a new threat emerging in USM's CoB that should give *anyone* pause when considering a job offer from there. That threat comes via the potential nefarious use of a new policy being enforced by CoB administrators.

According to the policy, one must gear his or her research agenda to the area in which he or she teaches. At well-run, highly-respected universities, administrators assign teaching schedules on the basis of research interests. That is, scholars choose their research interests and administrators follow by making every effort to accommodate those faculty by assigning them courses whose contents converge with the faculty's research interests. That's not only good for faculty, it's good for students. At USM's College of Business, it's the other way around. Faculty are assigned courses to teach by administrators, and then faculty are required by those administrators to write and publish in their assigned teaching areas.

Most of you likely already understand the dangers presented by this. But, let's take an example to see what damage can be done. Take, for instance, newly hired finance faculty -- Kimberly Goodwin. Goodwin is wrapping up her PhD studies in finance at the University of Alabama, and she is getting ready to begin her academic career at USM. Right now, Goodwin and EFIB chair, George Carter, are on good terms. As such, Carter will likely be assigning Goodwin to teach real estate courses at USM. Goodwin's interest area is real estate. However, if her professional relationship with Carter sours in any way -- something that could happen at any moment given Carter's total lack of tolerance of faculty dissent -- Carter could assign Goodwin a teaching schedule consisting of principles of macroeconomics and money and banking courses. With a PhD in finance, Carter would have no trouble justifying placement in these courses. Things won't be so good for Goodwin, however, as she would then be required to engage in a research agenda on topics that she has neither the interest nor preparation to be really successful doing. In this example, Goodwin could be on a fast track to professional failure, with her only hope being to escape USM. Given the vagaries of academic labor markets, Goodwin's fate could be sealed.

Would you want to be in Goodwin's shoes?