

# SEDONA Files

In an effort to shed more light on the annual evaluation process in the CoB, this is Part XI in a series of examinations of CoB faculty SEDONA materials, as they appeared on 2 May 2006, or just after the time of the CoB's annual evaluation. Previous exhibits have pointed out that CoB faculty are responsible for maintaining their CV items on SEDONA, an electronic database. As stated in an e-mail by Dean Doty, SEDONA materials **only** are to be evaluated by CoB administrators at the annual review hearing.

In this issue we visit the SEDONA records of Elizabeth LaFleur (Professor of Marketing). We start with the now public CoB Profitability Spreadsheet (available at [www.usmpride.com](http://www.usmpride.com)) that lists a number of interesting facts, including each individual's grant contributions to USM. Three CoB faculty are listed as being involved with grant work. Farhang Niroomand and Sharon Topping have been known to engage in grant projects. The third, however, is Elizabeth K. LaFleur, whose line item in the profitability spreadsheet reports a \$68,500 grant income to USM.

LaFleur's grant activity was news to the SEDONA Files staff, so we decided to look a little closer at her SEDONA file. LaFleur lists one possibility for a funded grant – an entry with the following description:

“‘Enhancing Analytical Decision Making Skills in MBAs: A Post-Katrina Mobile Approach,’ Grant proposes a redesign of MBA 610: Analytical Decision Making which is required of all MBA students. The course redesign strategy will be to fully utilize the mobile, wireless technology granted throughout the Fall, 2006 offering of this MBA class and to compare learning outcomes in the technology-facilitated section to learning outcomes in the Fall, 2005 section of the course., Hewlett Packard, (\$70,500).”

Of course, LaFleur's grant proposal from 2006 lists a funding level that is \$2,000 higher than the reported level from the profitability report. However, the grant fits LaFleur's record of pursuing teaching grants. Nothing else listed in the SEDONA database matches up with LaFleur's reported grant contributions.

Several issues rear their heads in LaFleur's proposal. First, the proposal calls for a “redesign of MBA 610: Analytical Decision Making....” Major course redesign should involve discussion among graduate faculty and a proposal to and vote of the entire faculty in the CoB; the former *may* have taken place, but the latter has not. If this grant proposal has indeed been funded and the changes to the course are implemented, it may signal yet another instance of Harold Doty allowing one of his favorites to circumvent CoB and USM policies and procedures.

The second issue that the grant raises is whether or not LaFleur has obtained permission from the ORSP at USM to use MBA students as test subjects in her “research project.” LaFleur states that the project will “...compare learning outcomes in the technology-facilitated section to learning outcomes in the Fall, 2005 section.” At a minimum,

LaFleur should obtain clearance from the ORSP before using student learning in her study. Whether or not this was accomplished **before** initiating the project (i.e., prior to Fall 2005) can only be answered by the ORSP and LaFleur.

Third, LaFleur's proposal contains methodological flaws that will render the "research" portion of the project nearly useless. Effects of Hurricane Katrina in the semester immediately post-Katrina will be linked to other factors, and since LaFleur is using Fall 2005 as her control group, there will be no real way to determine if it were the technology or the time removed from Katrina that may have impacted Fall 2006 learning. As such, LaFleur's research motivation seems shabbily constructed, leaving the grant exposed as an attempt to grab more classroom technology that will help mask poor instructional skills.

Fourth, the proposal indicates that LaFleur was the instructor for MBA 610 in Fall 2005 and is the instructor for MBA 610 in Fall 2006. LaFleur's SEDONA exhibits no terminal qualification in statistics, and her 2000-present publication record shows nothing to suggest that she is qualified to instruct that course. As such, LaFleur's position as instructor of MBA 610 may be endangering the CoB's AACSB accreditation.

Comment:

LaFleur's grant activity appears to be smoke and mirrors. Assuming the grant was funded and technology purchased, little or none of the funding would be available to defray the cost of keeping LaFleur on faculty at USM, given that her \$SCH – Salary + Benefits equals -\$33,704.28. The technology described in the grant blurb from SEDONA is clearly a nonessential expenditure, given other needs in the CoB.