

Duane Cobb Responds – See Below!

Sami Dakhli: Deluded or Disingenuous?

A recent report at usmnews.net revealed that Sami Dakhli, author/presenter of last Friday's attack on usmnews.net editor Marc DePree, has been pursuing a strategy to obtain tenure without having to follow the usual path. The following portion of one of Dakhli's emails to the EFIB Department was presented in the previous report.

From: cob-ecfinintbus-bounces@usm.edu on behalf of Sami Dakhli
[sami.dakhli@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 14, 2007
To: EFIB Department
Subject: Re: [Cob-ecfinintbus] Suggestions

. . . Now to answer your question: I do not recall having been quoted a magic number. I have been told, however, that my publication record would have been "more than enough" to get me tenure at USM (just as it should have been enough at UA, but that's a different story and goes back to what John so eloquently wrote last night). So here's the data once more: 3 As and 3 Bs would be *more* than enough.

Dakhli's statement that his "publication record would have been 'more than enough' to get me tenure at USM (just as it should have been enough at UA, but that's a different story and goes back to what John so eloquently wrote last night)" is very interesting. As was previously written, Dakhli is presumably lobbying for tenure at USM now, without producing scholarship in Hattiesburg and content to coast on the fairly minimal output that is the residual from his time at the University of Alabama (the "UA" mentioned in the email above).

This reporter was interested in Dakhli's assertion regarding the strength of his research record and his insinuation that politics were the reason he was not tenured in Tuscaloosa. I decided to investigate the economics department at UA to check the veracity of Dakhli's claims. To do so, I identified the previous individuals who had received tenure in the past decade (plus or minus) in economics at UA. The task was eased by the fact that most economics faculty members have made their vitas public by linking them to their UA web pages. The individuals in question are Gary Hoover, Paul Pecorino, and Akram Temimi. Each is discussed in turn. Rankings of journals are taken from the journal ranking system developed by P. Kalaitzidakis, T. P. Mamuneas and T. Stengos and presented at the University of Leicester's economics department website. Journals ranked lower than 159th are calculated as ranking 160th.

Gary Hoover (Ph.D., Washington University in St. Louis) was promoted to Associate Professor status from Assistant Professor status in 2004, following the customary 6 year probationary period. Hoover's published (or presumably accepted at the time of the tenure/promotion decision) articles appeared in the *American Economic Review* (1st), the *Journal of Income Distribution* (160th), *Economics and Politics* (160th), the *Eastern Economic Journal* (160th), *Journal of Labor Research* (160th), *Applied Economics* (64th), *Contemporary Economic Policy* (60th), the *Journal of Economic Literature* (20th), and the *Review of Income and Wealth* (68th). That totals 9 refereed articles (average ranking = 94.78), including one coauthored paper in the *American Economic Review*, the field's premiere journal.

Paul Pecorino (Ph.D., Duke University) was promoted to Associate Professor from Assistant Professor in 1998 after a 4 year probationary period at UA and a 3 year probationary period at the University of Mississippi. Pecorino's published (or presumably accepted at the time of the tenure/promotion decision) articles appeared in the *Canadian Journal of Economics* (42nd), the *Journal of Public Economics* (19th), the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (160th), the *Journal of Macroeconomics* (thrice) (67th), *Oxford Economic Papers* (53rd), the *International Review of Law and Economics* (twice) (130th), the *Journal of Monetary Economics* (10th), *Public Choice* (43rd), the *Journal of Development Economics* (39th), the *Journal of Legal Studies* (160th), the *American Economic Review* (1st), and *Economic Inquiry* (36th). That totals 15 refereed articles (average ranking = 68.27), including one sole-authored paper in the *American Economic Review*, the field's premiere journal.

Akram Temimi (Ph.D., University of Illinois) was promoted to Associate Professor from Assistant Professor in approximately 2002 after a customary 6 year probationary period.¹ Temimi's published (or presumably accepted at the time of the tenure/promotion decision) articles appeared in the *Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance* (160th), the *Journal of Political Economy* (3rd), the *Journal of Mathematical Economics* (31st), the *Journal of Public Economic Theory* (160th), and the *Economics Bulletin* (160th). That totals 5 refereed articles (average ranking = 102.80), including one coauthored paper in the *Journal of Political Economy*, one of the field's undisputed premiere journals (i.e., top 5).

Now, let's turn to Dakhli's publications that would have been counted for his tenure process at UA. Dakhli's published (or presumably accepted at the time of the tenure/promotion decision) articles appeared in the *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control* (23rd), *Economic Theory* (16th), *Economics Bulletin* (160th), *Public Choice* (43rd), the *Manchester School* (97th), and the *Review of*

¹ Temimi's timeline is approximated based on information found on the Internet. His vita was not readily available.

International Economics (160th). That totals 6 refereed articles (average ranking = 83.17). Note also that Dakhliya's publication record lacks a premiere journal publication.

Based only on some of the numbers, it is clear that Dakhliya's publication record is not as good as his predecessors' in the UA tenure and promotion system. While all the records contain some filler publications (i.e., 160th ranked items), Hoover, Pecorino, and Temimi all have comparable or greater volume of output as compared with Dakhliya's output. However, and here's the real issue, at a state flagship university such as UA, Assistant Professors can be reasonably expected to produce premiere level scholarship. Hoover, Pecorino, and Temimi did that, while Dakhliya did not. In fact, Hoover, Pecorino and Temimi each produced a top 5 publication, while Dakhliya's best did not crack the top 20. Tenuring Dakhliya would have arguably lowered "tenure bar" at Alabama, a Tier II institution, too much.

Now it appears that Dakhliya has tired of the publication process and wishes to compete no longer in the scholarship system. In his first year at USM, he continues to develop working papers (listed on his website), but the stream of publications has apparently slowed to a trickle. In February, Dakhliya appears to have been lobbying for tenure based on his previous publications. Also during the past year, Dakhliya appears to have begun building the illusion of scholarship by conducting the EFIB seminar series and holding many "scholarly" discussions with others, presumably in hopes that his record (which failed him at UA), along with this illusion, will carry him through to tenure and promotion.

A Response from Duane Cobb (5/11/07)

I found this evening's report very interesting – enough even to tempt me to examine the journal rating list available at the Leicester University website that is mentioned above. While I was looking at it and comparing what it shows to the listings in this report, I found an error in the discussion of Sami Dakhliya's research. The reporter erroneously credited Dakhliya's publication in *Economic Theory* with a 160th ranking, instead of the 16th place that this journal occupies in the ranking at Leicester. I have since made the correction above in this report (in orange font). Note that this correction changes Dakhliya's average ranking score substantially, dropping it from 107.17 to 83.17. This number still lags behind the reported number for Pecorino (68.27), but is now better than that of Temimi (102.80) and about the same as Hoover (94.78). I have taken the liberty to capsule this corrected information below:

Name	Avg. Ranking	#Articles
Pecorino, Paul	68.27	15
Dakhlia, Sami	83.17	6
Hoover, Gary	94.78	9
Temimi, Akram	102.80	5

Two things struck me when I examined this table. First, Dakhlia comes out in second place now, instead of fourth (out of 4), after correcting the *Economic Theory* mistake. The second point, however, is that Pecorino and Hoover are potentially penalized vis-à-vis Dakhlia and Temimi for have published more articles given that the system chosen by the usmnews.net reporter averages the rankings.

To account for this aspect, I thought it might be interesting to run the numbers using the top 5 publications for each of the four economists, using Temimi's article count of 5 as a restriction. Those results are below:

Name	Avg. Ranking	#Articles
Pecorino, Paul	21.00	5
Hoover, Gary	42.60	5
Dakhlia, Sami	67.80	5
Temimi, Akram	102.80	5

Using this method, Dakhlia is pushed back into third place (out of 4), quite a bit behind Hoover and out of sight of Pecorino. However, even this method is perhaps unfair to Dakhlia and the rest, since it is still based on averages.

I think the reporter had it right on one count: at a state flagship university, it's the elite level journals (Top 10) that count, and that's where Dakhlia falls behind, as the table below points out:

Name	Elite Level Publications	Rank
Pecorino, Paul	<i>American Economic Review</i>	1
	<i>Journal of Monetary Econ</i>	10
Hoover, Gary	<i>American Economic Review</i>	1
Temimi, Akran	<i>Journal of Political Economy</i>	3
Dakhlia, Sami		

Using the Top 10 as a basis, Pecorino led the pack with 2, while Hoover and Temimi each had one. Dakhlia did not produce an elite level journal while at Alabama. One source I spoke with today tells me that Hoover's *Journal of Economic Literature* would also garner

a lot of attention at many state flagships (so, perhaps he could be counted as having 1.5 instead of just 1).

While I thought that this report was interesting, mistake or not this appears be one usmnews.net report where the number crunching – USM-style – did not have its usual appropriateness, since we are talking about a Tier II state flagship school (Alabama). In my estimation, the few sentences beginning with “However, and here’s the real issue, at a state flagship university such as UA . . .” and ending with “. . . arguably lowered “tenure bar” at Alabama, a Tier II institution, too much” said all that needed to be said in this case.

If the reporter on this case is out there, I would like to see a number-crunching exercise like the one above, but using the USM information if you would care to put one together.