

Seven Questions

Interviews with Current/Former CoB Faculty about Life in and Outside the CoB

This begins a new series here at USMNEWS.net where current and former CoB profs are interviewed by USMNEWS.net. Their answers to *seven questions* promise to be both informative and interesting. Let's go right to the next round of *seven questions* for another former CoBer:

Q1. How is USM's business school mainly different from your current setting?

Well, my dean doesn't pick fights with faculty members -- I'm thinking of Harold Doty here -- and the Associate Dean -- thinking of Farhang Niroomand -- doesn't use threats to keep junior faculty "in their place." Faculty are happy to come to work, and there's a sense of positive energy when something good happens to somebody else. If you get a publication, you aren't timid about announcing it, which is a big change from the USM CoB, because a publication in a good journal was always belittled by the "company men," and you might have found yourself the target of a beat-down campaign for achieving too much. Those days are gone. As someone who left USM before me said: "Happiness is Hattiesburg in the rear view mirror."

Q2. Did you sense that being a faculty in USM's business school hindered your efforts to find a job elsewhere?

First off, everybody knew about USM's problems, but they knew about the CoB's problems as a separate and distinct set of issues that are unrelated to central administration. So, everybody I talked to had a good idea what kind of disastrous, provincial system was in place in Hattiesburg, and they didn't really have to ask why I wanted out of USM and the CoB. I got the very clear sense that the vast majority of faculty at other schools knew who was causing the problems, and they knew it wasn't me.

Q3. What are you hearing there about the job new CoB dean Lance Nail is doing back in Hattiesburg?

From what I can gather, he's doing the right things, but he's making a mistake by leaving the old guard in positions of authority. If possible, he needs to effect a complete administrative turnover (outside of the Dean's office), and he needs to make sure that his committee chairs are on board with the plan to improve the CoB. I have

been told that Nail is rewarding real achievement (and not rewarding inflated achievement), and that won't sit well with the gold diggers.

Q4. In your view, what is the biggest problem Nail currently faces?

Lance Nail's biggest problem, in my opinion, is the fact that the long-time USM/CoB political "machine" isn't on his side. There is no evidence that Harold Doty, Farhang Niroomand, Dave Duhon, Steve Jackson, George Carter, and others want a meritocracy. In fact, the evidence strongly indicates that they have spent decades fighting merit-based systems as they exist at the majority of high-quality academic institutions nationwide. You only have to look at the CoB's most recent journal ranking document to see what the old-time CoBers want. Nail needs to understand that the longer he allows these people to stay in positions of authority, the harder his job will be and the higher the probability that they will undermine him.

Q5. We've heard a lot about how bad Harold Doty, George Carter, Farhang Niroomand, etc., are through various reports and editorials. In your view, who are one or two more "under the radar" types in the CoB who could be detrimental to Nail's efforts to improve the organization?

There is a group of associate/assistant professors who clearly don't want to do real academic work. They "play" at teaching, research, and service and spend significant time politicking. Mary Anderson, John Clark, Sami Dakhliya, Akbar Marvasti, and Mike Wittmann are the core of this group. Many of these were involved in the recent journal ranking process, and they made sure that their pet journals received rankings that equate them to discipline standard bearers. None of these individuals has a true premier journal publication in his or her field, yet at least three hold or are in the running for CoB professorships/directorships. As long as these individuals have the opportunity to "game" the CoB system, Nail's job will be much more difficult.

Q6. What change would you recommend that Nail make in the short-term?

Establish a standard with respect to tenure and promotion that reflects what he wants in the CoB, even if that means some short-term difficulty in dismissing faculty who have taken the easy road. He needs to shut down the "alternate route to tenure."

Q7. Do you think Nail can get the CoB back to something resembling its peak years?

Only if he can manage the group that wants to maintain the status quo. Unless he can handle them, he'll end up like former dean Bill Gunther: captured and trying to get out.