

Special Report

A Jury of Your Peers?

An Investigative Series on the CoB Advisory Committee's Role in the Grievance Process

This report represents Part 5 of our look at the CoB Advisory Committee's role in the Faculty Grievance process. This subject has sparked interest in usmpride.com readers since the filing of two separate Grievances in recent weeks – one by professors Marc DePree and Tom Lindley, and another by professor Franklin Mixon. Both of these Grievances were initiated against the actions of EFIB Chair George Carter, and the details of both are available at usmpride.com.

In the Mixon Grievance, the CAC met and voted unanimously against Mixon's Grievance (see documents at usmpride.com). Among the members of the CAC (from the traditional business disciplines) for the 2006-07 academic year, those participating in the Mixon hearing were:

Stephen Bushardt	Professor of Management
Jim Henderson	Professor of Accounting
Tony Henthorne	Professor of Marketing
Chang-Tseh Hsieh	Professor of MIS
Elizabeth LaFleur	Professor of Marketing

As has become customary during CoB Dean Harold Doty's Deanship, the Department of Management and Marketing – Doty's home department – dominates this group in terms of representation (60%) much like it does others.

In this installment, usmpride.com investigators examine some of the recent documentation about grading patterns in the CoB. In this case we look at those of marketing professor Elizabeth LaFleur. In the pick-a-prof grades analysis for marketing, LaFleur appears to be the CoB's only "easy grader" in MKT 300. Evidence of that is shown below through an excerpt from that report:

A Look at pic^aprof Grades in MKT (by Course)

All of our grade histories are (painstakingly) obtained directly from university records, we do NOT rely on individual students telling us their grades. (pic^aprof)

Course	Professor	#Students	CumGPA	%A	%B	%C	%D	%F
MKT 300	LaFleur, E.	114	2.75	30%	33%	25%	7%	5%
	Lopez, T.	156	2.10	6%	26%	47%	15%	6%
	Loyd, D.	172	2.04	7%	28%	34%	22%	8%
	Williams, A.	53	1.96	4%	23%	45%	23%	6%

Not only is LaFleur's CumGPA (2.75) much higher than those in the cluster of Lopez, Loyd, and Williams (2.10, 2.04, and 1.96), LaFleur's percentage of As awarded (33%) is

dramatically higher than any of the other three (4% to 7%). The difference between LaFleur's grade distribution and that of Dolly Loyd, an instructor of marketing, shows that LaFleur is perhaps one of the PhD personnel in the Department of Management and Marketing who could learn something about grading rigor from the department's instructors (as in the report below).

What the MgtMkt Profs could Learn from the Instructors

In the report headlined again below, the *Special Report* investigators named LaFleur's MKT 300 course as one of the CoB's principles level "gut courses."

Special Report

The CoB's Soft Underbelly

A Look at Instructor-Specific Principles Level "Gut Courses" in the College of Business at USM

The table from that report appears below:

Table 1
Instructor-Specific Principles Level "Gut Courses" in the CoB

Name	Course	#Students	CumGPA
Pate, G.	ACC 200	39	2.82
Granger, B.	BA 200	40	2.80
Carter, G.	BA 301	25	2.88
Nissan, E.	BA 301	30	3.00
Malik, F.	BA 303	42	3.23
Nissan, E.	BA 303	181	2.86
LaFleur, E.	MKT 300	114	2.75
Michael, D.	MGT 300	52	3.07

The current installment in this *Special Report* series concludes by examining a recent USM Press Release by Jason Sherwood (see below). It indicates that LaFleur is working closely with Thomson Publishing executives in the development of Thomson's interactive textbook project.



Writer: Jason Sherwood

Gulfport – When Dr. Beth LaFleur, marketing professor at the University of Southern Mississippi on the Gulf Coast, contacted the publishing company at Thomson Business and Economics about its new virtually interactive textbook, the company sent five corporate executives to south Mississippi to participate in focus groups with her marketing students.

LaFleur called it a great learning opportunity for the students. “This was a win-win situation. The Thomson executives discussed the development of this new product and its introduction to a national educational marketplace. They gained feedback from both of their customer groups – students and professors,” LaFleur said.

“The focus groups were conducted at the point in the semester when we learn about the new product development process and the importance of product and service quality. The students saw marketing in action and learned about Thomson’s business strategy.”

The focus groups took place in late October for both morning and evening classes. Thomson representatives were publisher Neil Marquardt, Vice President and Editorial Director Jack Calhoun, manager editorial media John Barans, Vice President of Sales Rick Ditzel, and Georgiann Adams, sales representative. Roughly 80 marketing students, composed of both traditional students and working adults, attended the groups, and Dr. Barry Babin, chair of the Department of Management and Marketing, also attended.

Thomson’s push to enhance the learning experience blends well with that of the College of Business and the university, said LaFleur. The marketing classes have been utilizing the new virtually enhanced text since the beginning of the fall, and LaFleur is also incorporating a number of technologies such as “clickers,” or response devices where the professor can integrate questions into a class presentation while measuring and tracking student response to those questions.

The interactive Thomson text, called Thomson Now, has performed well in other subjects, such as math and science. The complementary Web site provides a variety of online assignments, e-lectures, tests, study guides, and an array of video clips, ranging from advertisements to segments from Small Business School on PBS. LaFleur said the students, who often work outside of school and have very busy schedules, enjoy the interaction and often use the online instructive games, such as “Beat the Clock,” to study for exams.

Thomson representatives say as the publishing industry continues changing, the future of learning will be more “technology based.” They are working to provide “digital solutions as a means of learning,” and they say the views of the students are important in this transition.

“At Thomson, we are increasingly reaching out to students to talk with them about their preferences and motivations for learning and going to school,” said Marquardt. “For publishers, this represents a radical shift in the way we develop products. In the past, we have traditionally worked exclusively with faculty when developing learning solutions; we believe we can learn a lot by reaching out to students since they are a very important voice.”

Some of these students will continue to provide feedback to Thomson executives, via a “student council” that is being formed. This student council will evaluate future enhancements to the text package and the Web site as the product continues to be refined. LaFleur and other marketing educators in the College of Business will also continue working with Thomson on product modifications.

LaFleur’s students have formed a “student council” that is set to evaluate future versions of Thomson’s text package and website. As Sherwood writes, “LaFleur and other marketing educators in the College of Business will also continue working with Thomson on product modifications.” As has been reported previously at usmpride.com, some educators in the marketing department have a close working relationship with Thomson. LaFleur now appears to be one of those. It has also been reported that Thomson funded the Management and Marketing Departmental Retreat at Canebrake in spring of 2006.

Is LaFleur main interest in helping Thomson make money? What was her role in Mixon’s Grievance Appeal process? Is the CoB’s Advisory Committee a jury of your peers? These and other questions will be explored as this series continues.