

Special Report

“Doing Business @ Southern Miss . . .”

An Investigative Report on the Mentoring of New CoB Faculty

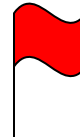
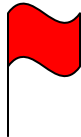
As USMNEWS.NET reporters and correspondents continue to sift through the pile of new documentation from USM (received via a Freedom of Information Act request) regarding the CoB’s 2007-08 6th Year Review by AACSB, new reports will continue to arrive on the pages of the website. This report looks at a portion of Interim Dean Alvin J. Williams’ response to AACSB regarding “Standard 11 – Faculty Management and Support.”

Standard 11 – Faculty Management and Support

“The Peer Review Team found that the assistant professors had a wide range of views regarding expectations for promotion and tenure. The Team found faculty mentoring for new faculty to be in an early stage of development. Due to the significant hiring across all the departments, the school should address as part of its 6th year review report progress in establishing clear expectations for all faculty and what efforts are underway to provide guidance and mentoring of new faculty who have joined the school.”

As Williams and the CoB’s administrative team note in the paragraph above, the CoB’s AACSB Peer Review Team found that the CoB’s assistant professors were having difficulty deciphering the CoB’s T&P expectations, and that there was very little, if any, mentoring of new faculty by senior faculty in the CoB. In response to these concerns, Williams and his team of chairs and AACSB committee leaders indicated in the CoB’s 6th Year Review Report that “[a]ll of the University-wide orientation initiatives [for new faculty] are supplemented in the College of Business.” This response, along with others, is shown in the insert below.

All of the University-wide orientation initiatives are supplemented in the College of Business. The college-level efforts introduce new faculty to the processes, expectations, and culture of the College of Business. The Dean and other administrators impart information on expectations in teaching, research, and service. Additionally, some historical background of the College is offered, along with information regarding majors, students, and some of the traditions in the unit.



While the face value of Williams’ remark about initiatives supplementation may or may not be zero, it’s his subsequent statements that raise warnings. Following a brief mention (listing) of “teaching, research, and service,” Williams and the CoB’s

management team and AACSB leaders move directly to a point of indicating that the CoB's "orientation program" involves teaching new CoB faculty about the CoB's "historical background" and various departmental "traditions." Do these "traditions" involve the "[Black Tuesday](#)" tradition regarding the EFIB Chair's prerogative of overturning the department's duly constituted faculty governance structure, even if doing so requires interpretation of an out-of-date USM Faculty Handbook and an unsubstantiated opinion from a lawyer? Do these traditions also involve the CoB Dean's prerogative to draft and sign contractual-like "[letters of agreement](#)" that are used to allow underperforming faculty to meet a specified set of conditions that may lie outside of the bounds delineated in *Enhancing Faculty Productivity*, the CoB's own faculty handbook? Also, who is the CoB's "historian-in-residence?" Is it management professor, Stephen Bushardt, who advocates an [occult-like organizational culture](#) (complete with "rituals") to guide individual behavior within an organization, or someone like SAIS Director Steven Jackson, who is still "new" to the CoB (and seemingly, to hear him tell it, to academia)?

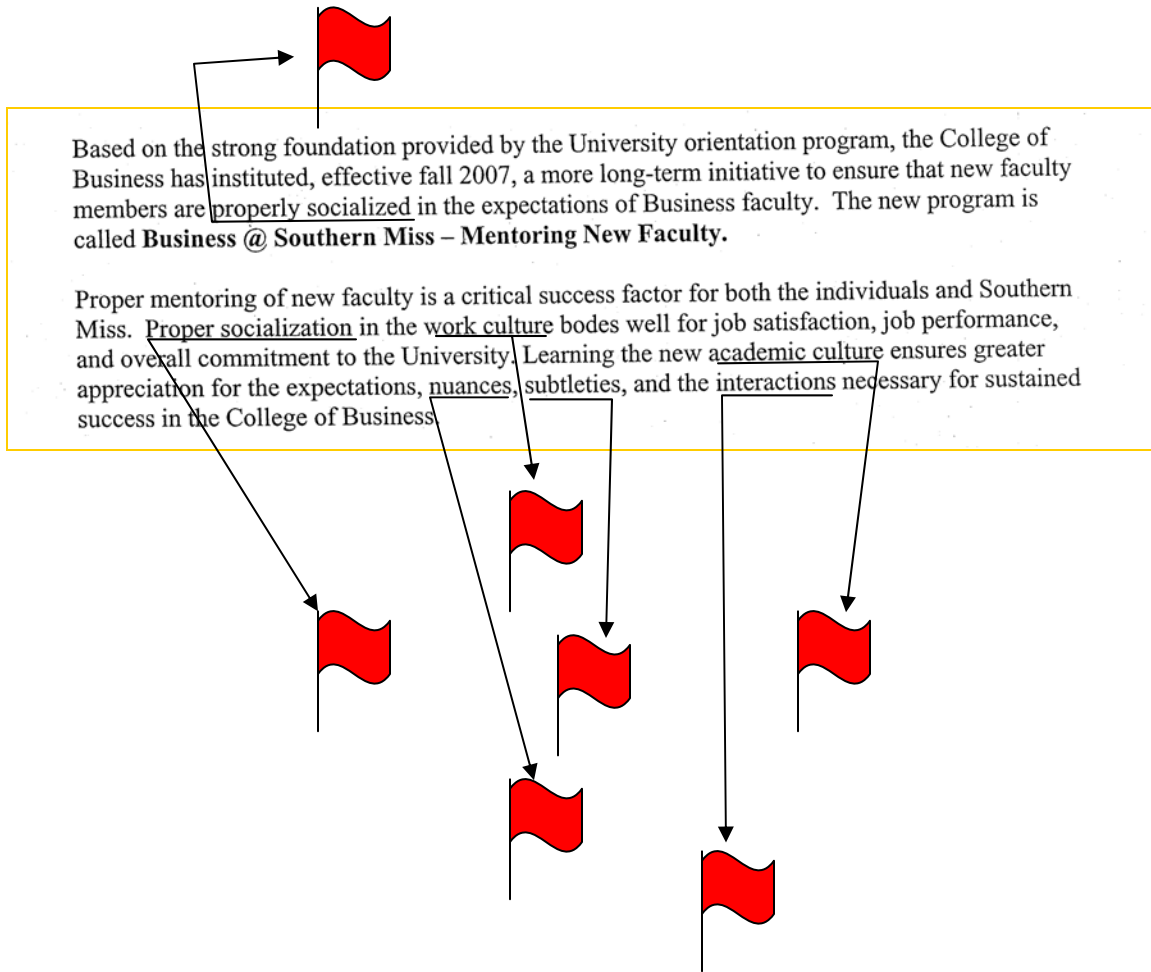
Williams' use of language continues on in the next part of the 6th Year Review Report:

The college-level orientation is followed by one at the department units. At this level, new faculty interact with their more immediate, discipline-specific colleagues. This allows for a more careful, informal platform to engage in discussions regarding key expectations and behaviors necessary for success.



According to Williams et al., the College-level "orientation" is followed by one in each of the academic units. According to sources, the MGT-unit new faculty "orientation" has traditionally been held at the Canebrake home of Bushardt, where some of the side-bar discussions of "necessary behaviors" come across more like an "indoctrination" than anything else. Use of the word behaviors also sounds like a harbinger of how [the CoB's new collegiality requirements](#) for T&P and merit raises will likely be employed.

"Why stop here?" That must have been the question that Williams et al. asked themselves, as the following portions from the CoB's AACSB 6th Year Review Report suggest:



The 6th Year Review Report passages above from Williams et al. are simply laced with terminology that, according to sources, would raise red flags for faculty at what *U.S. News & World Report* refers to as “Top National Universities.” Just what does the phrase “new faculty members are properly socialized” mean? Does it mean the same thing as what the 31st & Pearl columnist meant when asking “[Can Pascalau be Hired, Then Indoctrinated?](#),” when referencing the EFIB’s new visiting instructor, Razvan Pascalau? If so, is Pascalau’s [relaxed grading scale](#) part of that socialization (indoctrination) process?

Again, does reference to the CoB’s “work (academic) culture” take us back to the [occult-like organizational culture](#) that Bushardt wrote about? Is a [bludgeoning](#) by Carter’s now infamous “tenure club” one of the [rituals](#) of that occult culture? Is the CoB administration’s portion of this culture any bit akin to the [The Ethics Mall of America](#)? Is Carter, with [misguided views](#) and everything else, this culture’s [resident ethicist](#)? These and so many other questions about the “work (academic) culture” phrase above deserve attention.

What are these “nuances” and “subtleties” about the CoB’s culture that Williams et al. are referencing above? Do they have anything to do with the way [faculty teaching](#)

[schedules](#) in the CoB are used in [carrot-and-stick](#) fashion to reinforce the CoB's "way of doing things?" Does faculty [happiness/satisfaction](#) have any place in this ethos, and, if so, [is it available](#) to *all* faculty? After two years of coverage by USMNEWS.NET, academicians the world over now know that, whether or not happiness/satisfaction is available to all CoB faculty, [proper merit raises and overload compensation certainly aren't](#).

Through all of the above, the passages from Williams et al. continue:

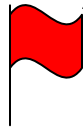
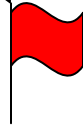
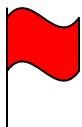
To facilitate immersion in the College of Business culture, **Business @ Southern Miss** will be initiated as a faculty mentoring program. The program is designed to acclimate new faculty to the institution, college, and community. Senior faculty will be paired with junior faculty based on research interests, individual preferences, and other variables. The department chair or designee will manage the process. All parties involved should agree on the expectations/results from the mentoring experience.

At some point during the mentoring process, there should be discussions regarding career planning, tenure/promotion expectations, performance evaluations, teaching/instructional matters, professional service (internal, external), professional networking, and adapting to the local community and culture. The faculty members involved may work out a plan that fits the comfort levels of both, including the degree of formality/informality.

Specific activities may include conversations about survival in the academic arena, handling student complaints, understanding the student evaluation process, assessment and student workload expectations, funding faculty travel, research, etc. Periodically scheduled visits, coffee breaks, and lunches, offer great opportunities to foster exchanging and sharing between the two parties.

New faculty members are also encouraged to get involved with the College/departmental seminar series in order to share their work with others (as discussed previously in the Standard 10 – Faculty Qualifications section). This facilitates interaction and networking and offers a great medium to get involved.

Collectively, the College and departments will structure a series of integrated experiences to ensure that new faculty colleagues are well-integrated into the culture and network of the College and University community as a whole. The program will be assessed and altered to meet the needs of new colleagues.



As the insert above shows, the familiar kinds of terms -- "local . . . culture" and "culture . . . of the College" -- appear once again, and they draw the same red flags as when they were used above. This time, however, there is one big difference. This time these terms

are used to describe the purpose of the CoB's *new* faculty mentoring program, **Business @ Southern Miss**. According to Williams et al., this new program is designed to "facilitate immersion in the College of Business culture . . . [and] acclimate new faculty to the institution, college and community." The whole idea of an "immersion" into "the local community and culture" not only harkens back to Bushardt's "[CoB as a cult](#)" program, it is also reminiscent of the way the elite members of CoB society [congregate in tony neighborhoods](#) and attend [high society gatherings](#). Those who govern the CoB may have even perfected [a recipe](#) for recruiting new faculty that fit the mold for an easy immersion.

What's perhaps most amusing about the new **Business @ Southern Miss** mentoring program is that USMNEWS.NET has yet to encounter any CoB faculty who knew, before this report was written, about the existence of the program. While such a brazen thing as manufacturing the existence a mentoring program in order to pass AACSB accreditation might seem shocking to faculty at Top National Universities, long-time readers of USMNEWS.NET (both near and far) have come to understand that nothing is beyond the bounds when it comes to what CoB administrators will do to maintain their salaries, working conditions (culture?), and other fringes. To attest to this, one has only to visit USMNEWS.NET's [Administrative Plagiarism](#) page, which covers the specifics of what CoB administrators and others did to attempt to fight the effects of the listing ship that was the CoB's floundering 2007 AACSB re-accreditation effort.

What's most alarming about the new **Business @ Southern Miss** mentoring program is the statement from Williams et al. that "[s]enior [CoB] faculty will be placed with new [CoB] faculty based on research interests, individual preferences, and other variables." For a program wherein pairings *should be* based solely on research interests, the addition of "individual preferences" and "other variables" in the determination of pairings not only makes the program ripe for the kinds of indoctrination described above, which raises a red flag, it also opens the door to the kinds activities that characterized a significant portion of the CoB's ethos of the 1980s -- activities that raise the warning flags for the academic equivalent of a Category 5 hurricane. One only has to look back on ECO's 2007-08 search for new faculty to see what the [boys in ECO](#) cook up when it comes to using the hiring processes to meet "[individual preferences](#)" and "[other variables](#)." And, as far as pairings go, Bushardt advises protégés [to stalk and/or flirt with](#) potential mentors, as well as [to search for](#) unethical mentors if necessary or beneficial to one's career. Of course, this adds more fuel to the cooking process.

Where does all of this get us? As you can see near the end of the latest Williams et al. passage above, we're right back to the *nonexistent* seminar series in all of the CoB's departments that was the subject of a recent *Special Report* series installment. Williams tells the AACSB that, through the *nonexistent* **Business @ Southern Miss** new faculty mentoring program, new CoB faculty are "encouraged to get involved with the College/departmental seminar series in order to share their work with others." Except for Dakhli's "EFIB Fridays," where [decade-old papers](#) are presented, these (future) new faculty will have one heck of a difficult time locating the venues for the seminar series in the CoB. To find Dakhli's, all one has to do is follow the aroma of pizza.