

# Special Report

## Let's Spin the Wheel Gut Courses and Gut Profs in the SAIS

It's that time again -- time for CoB students to spin the wheel on the course scheduling process and see what comes up. In this report, USMNEWS.NET provides its annual look at grade distributions across courses and faculty in USM's College of Business. As always, the grades are provided to us by **pickaprof**, and, in the words of **pickaprof**, these "[g]rade histories are (painstakingly) obtained directly from university records."

We begin with Table 1 below, which contains grading histories from the School of Accountancy and Information Systems (SAIS).

**Table 1**  
**Gut Courses and Gut Profs in MGT & MKT, May/June 2008**

<b>Course Prof</b>	<b>#Grades</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>George Carter Rigor Ratio</b>
AC 200 Brown, J.	38	9	17	8	1	3	0.154
Munn, P.	350	60	98	90	35	67	0.646
Jordan/Pate	97	17	35	33	5	7	0.231
Simmons, V.	90	15	17	27	16	15	0.969
AC 300 Brown, J.	59	8	32	17	0	2	0.050
DePree, M.	374	42	98	124	68	42	0.786
AC 320 Brown, J.	24	4	12	4	1	3	0.250
Posey, R.	103	22	31	29	12	9	0.396
AC 325 Henderson, J.	150	16	31	51	30	22	1.106
AC 330 Clark, S.	232	18	56	95	42	21	0.851
AC 401 Albin, M.	115	10	40	47	8	10	0.360
AC 402 Jordan/Pate	134	23	45	54	9	3	0.176
AC 407 Posey, R.	134	15	50	46	15	8	0.354
AC 409 Albin, M.	50	8	24	15	1	2	0.094
BA 200 King, E.	780	94	148	203	148	187	1.384
Nourse, R.	36	8	13	9	5	1	0.286
IS 300 Chen, K.L.	78	21	18	39	0	0	0.000
Davis, D.	150	34	51	39	12	14	0.306

	Magruder, J.	164	36	66	34	21	7	0.275
IS 301	Chen, K.L.	29	8	14	6	1	0	0.045
IS 309	Davis, D.	86	24	31	26	0	5	0.091
IS 310	Davis, D.	21	6	9	4	1	1	0.133
IS 315	Chen, K.L.	21	10	7	4	0	0	0.000
IS 320	Chen, K.L.	27	7	20	0	0	0	0.000
	Hsieh, C.-T.	42	13	16	13	0	0	0.000
IS 406	Magruder, J.	20	5	6	10	1	0	0.091
IS 408	Magruder, J.	59	13	21	21	4	0	0.118

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**Notes:** Only data where #Grades>19 are included above. The "George Carter Rigor Ratio" is equal to (D+F)/(A+B).

There are several troubling details in Table 1 above, and almost all of them relate to the Information Systems (IS) portion of the SAIS. First, Chang-Tseh Hsieh, the CoB's *McCarty Distinguished Professor of Management Information Systems*, is a gut prof. With a "George Carter Rigor Ratio" (GCRR) of 0.000 in the only entry for Hsieh in Table 1 above (IS 320), there is simply no evidence of *any* rigor in a Hsieh-taught IS course.<sup>1</sup> Second, Hsieh's protégé -- Kuo Lane Chen -- may be the biggest embarrassment to the CoB in terms of a lack of rigor in teaching. Whether it's IS 300 or IS 320, Chen offers an unmitigated gut course. Only in IS 301, where Chen's GCRR is still only 0.045, does Chen produce a GCRR that exceeds zero.<sup>2</sup>

Another element in Table 1 is that, using a GCRR<0.1 standard for gut course classification, every member of the IS group offers at least one gut course. For Hsieh and Chen, these are listed above. For MIS professor Donna Davis that course is IS 301, while for James Magruder it is IS 406. Both Davis and Magruder barely avoid slipping a second course into the gut course category. Davis' GCRR for IS 310 is only 0.133, while Magruder's GCRR for IS 408 is only 0.118. Finally, there is not a single IS course where the GCRR exceeds even 0.5. Only Davis' and

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<sup>1</sup> The "George Carter Rigor Ratio" is equal to (D+F)/(A+B). Sources say Carter first developed this ratio for use in the EFIB's spring 2007 annual evaluation, though none of the other CoB departments adopted the GCRR for annual evaluation purposes. CoB insiders have told reporters at USMNEWS.NET that Carter created the GCRR with the assistance of former EFIB economist Charles Sawyer, who is now at Texas Christian University, in an effort to develop a weapon that could potentially be used to lower the teaching ratings of so-called EFIB dissenters.

<sup>2</sup> Even in Chen's IS 401 course her GCRR is a 0.000. It is not included in Table 1 because the number of grades is only 17, three short of the Table 1 requirement.

Magruder's sections IS 300 yield GCRRs exceeding 0.25, and these are only 0.306 and 0.275, respectively.

Fortunately for the CoB, associate professor of legal studies, Ernest King, can be considered a part of the IS faculty group. King's GCRR for BA 200 is a very respectable 1.384 -- a figure that compares very well with the rest of the CoB. However, CoB students can avoid King by taking Rodney Nourse's section of BA 200, where the GCRR comes in at only 0.286.

Let's turn to the ACC side of the SAIS, where things look much better. There, the only unmitigated gut course appears to be ACC 409, which is taught (seemingly) exclusively by associate professor Marvin Albin. Albin's other course offering is ACC 401, and his GCRR there is 0.360. This range -- 0.0 to 0.4 -- puts Albin on the cusp of the gut prof classification. ACC's biggest problem appears to be with instructor John Brown. Brown's GCRRs for ACC 200, ACC 300, and ACC 320 are 0.154, 0.050 and 0.25, respectively. Brown is easily a gut prof.

Accountants Stanley Clark, Marc DePree, James Henderson and Valerie Simmons are consistently solid instructors when it comes to GCRRs. The GCRRs for each of these exceeds 0.75 in every instance above. Henderson's GCRR for ACC 325 comes in above 1.0, while Simmons' GCRR falls only slightly below 1.0, at 0.967, for ACC 200. Table 1 does, however, disprove the recent claim made (at a CoB faculty meeting) by Henderson to have "bombed" more CoB students than any other CoB faculty. Table 1 shows that, in absolute terms, Patricia Munn, DePree and King have each assigned more Fs than Henderson. In terms of percentages, Munn, Simmons, and King have each assigned more Fs than Henderson.

Finally, one facet of the ACC portion of Table 1 above deserves further explanation. Accountants Charles Jordan and Gwen Pate are combined in Table 1 because the coding in the **pickaprof** database links one set of grading data to both Jordan and Pate. Thus, the data that appear in Table 1 for "Jordan/Pate" are data that likely belong to either Jordan *or* Pate. However, there is no way for USMNEWS.NET reporters to decipher the information.

Based on the data in this report, Nail has cause for concern. The IS portion of the SAIS is leaning much more towards academic *rigor mortis* than it is towards academic rigor. The duo of Hsieh and Chen is a large portion of the cause of this problem. If sources are correct in reporting that the efforts to assign Chen a terminal contract (for 2008-09) made by Interim CoB dean Alvin Williams, Interim SAIS director Steven Jackson and other IS faculty were recently thwarted, then USM President Martha Saunders has put Nail in a bind when it comes to fixing the IS portion of SAIS.