




Special Report

Memo to Martha, Part I

A Look at Alvin Williams' Role in the Mobbing of Aug-07

Reporters at usmnews.net have received a copy of a memo sent by Interim CoB Dean Alvin Williams to USM President Martha Saunders, through Interim Provost Bobby Middlebrooks, asking Saunders to terminate the employment (at USM) of USMNEWS.NET editor and accounting professor, Marc DePree. Williams' letter is dated 21 August 2007, the same day that Saunders penned a letter to DePree advising DePree that he was being relieved of his teaching and services responsibilities to USM during the fall 2007 semester.

The salutations of William's memo are shown below:

	<p>The University of Southern Mississippi</p> <p>College of Business Dean's Office</p>	<p>118 College Drive #5021 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001 Tel: 601.266.4659 Fax: 601.266.5814 www.usm.edu</p>
<p>August 21, 2007</p>		
TO:	Dr. Martha Saunders President	
THROUGH:	Dr. Bobby Middlebrooks  Provost	
FROM:	Alvin J. Williams, Interim Dean  College of Business	
RE:	Employment Termination for Dr. Marc DePree, Associate Professor, School of Accountancy and Information Systems (SAIS)	

It's worth noting that Williams, as Interim Dean, mistakenly refers to DePree as an associate professor of accounting, thus stripping DePree of the full professor title he (DePree) earned several years prior to Williams' memo. Sources say that such a glaring error highlights the shoddiness characterizing the work of some of the individuals who serve in the administration, past and present, of USM's business school.

Below we have inserted the text of page 1 of Williams' 3-page memo dated 21 August 2007.

Over the past several years Dr. DePree has engaged in behaviors that have severely constrained the capacity of SAIS and the College of Business to function at levels necessary to foster an appropriate learning environment for students and a collegial atmosphere for faculty to teach, conduct research, and perform professional service. Dr. DePree has helped create an environment in which faculty members and students do not feel safe to go about their usual business in Joseph Greene Hall. This has impacted negatively the ability to do the usual things, such as conduct departmental faculty meetings, hold College faculty meetings, convene committee meetings, and interact with students. For practical purposes, the SAIS has had very few departmental meetings, in part, due to the perceived intrusiveness posed by his recording devices. By virtue of the type of work that faculty members do, the ability to get together and exchange ideas and thoughts on teaching, research, and service represent the core of the academy. The ability to engage in this exchange was thwarted by Dr. DePree.

More specifically, Dr. DePree has used what was perceived as a recording device, without permission, to record conversations between faculty members as well as between faculty and students. Knowledge of these behaviors made faculty less reluctant to engage freely in exchange that is associated with a collegial academic environment. When faculty members fear talking about research projects, university activities, and instructional topics because of their likelihood of being recorded for unknown purposes, it poses a real danger to the atmosphere so characteristic of a university work environment.

It is no secret in the CoB, across USM, and throughout the nation (and world) that USM's School of Accountancy and Information Systems (SAIS) is, and has always been, fraught with problems. In his first sentence of text, Williams appears to lay all of those problems at DePree's feet. Williams goes further by pointing out that Dr. DePree has "helped create an environment where faculty and students do not feel safe to go about their usual business in Joseph Greene Hall," the home of USM's CoB. This comment is particularly peculiar given that DePree is known by many accounting students as the most proficient instructor in the School. Additionally, a number of students have contacted www.usmnews.net over the past 18 months and encouraged DePree to continue opening up USM's College of Business, as USMNEWS.NET has been doing since spring of 2006. Not only that, the evidence on scholarship quality in the SAIS clearly supports the contention that DePree is unmatched by any other faculty on the accounting side of the SAIS.

Williams' next phrase is interesting:

"This has impacted negatively the ability to do the usual things, such as conduct departmental faculty meetings, hold College faculty meetings, convene committee meetings, and interact with students."

Williams' litany (above) runs into trouble when juxtaposed with the evidence. First, sources indicate that Interim SAIS Director Steven Jackson did not even attend the fall 2007 SAIS faculty meeting, the inaugural one in terms of Jackson's Directorship. Fall

faculty meetings are particularly significant, given that faculty are allowed to vote on annual governance options at that time. Sources indicate that, when SAIS faculty entered the meeting, they were met with only a stack of ballots. There was no real meeting. Not only that, each department was instructed to elect representatives for the Dean's Search Committee – a task SAIS failed to complete as a result of Jackson's absence. Only later did Jackson forward names to the President, and there was no School-wide vote on the matter, nor was there any representation in Jackson's list from the IS part of SAIS.

According to sources, the real issue with meetings in the SAIS now turns to Jackson, who lives on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and is not fond of making the trip to CoB-H. What meetings fail to occur will now lie squarely on Jackson's shoulders. Jackson, shown below while at Loyola University in New Orleans (prior to Jan-07), has been the



Steven Jackson

subject of numerous reports of late here at USMNEWS.NET. These have shown how (1) Jackson submitted a SEDONA vita to CoB officials with misrepresentations in the scholarly productivity section, and (2) Jackson received a 2007 merit raise for 2006 activities, even though he was employed at a private university in Louisiana at that time.¹

Despite Williams' statements, the CoB has had no difficulties when it comes to scheduling and holding faculty meetings. Thus, DePree appears to have had no hand in complicating either the scheduling of CoB faculty meetings or the completion of them. On the other hand, some CoB faculty have participated in thwarting the scheduling of CoB faculty meetings. For example, John Clark, an associate professor of finance, put a



John Clark

¹ For more on Jackson, read [The Mother of All Questions](#) and [Games People Play: Another Ethicist, Another Ethics Problem?](#).

motion on the table at the 31-Aug-07 CoB faculty meeting that approved the conferring of degrees on all December 2007 CoB graduation candidates, pending their (the students) completion of degree requirements.² This process usually occurs at the December CoB faculty meeting each fall. With the passage of Clark's motion, there will not likely be a December 2007 CoB faculty meeting this fall.

DePree's service record shows very little CoB committee activity. Sources indicate that this is precisely because CoB administrators, past and present, have chosen to "isolate" DePree and "prevent" him from participating in faculty governance processes in the CoB. That this is the case precludes DePree from having the ability to negatively impact the convening of CoB committees, as Williams claims.

Williams' memo makes two interesting statements about recording devices. They occur on page 1 in close proximity, and are, in order, as follows:

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Williams' first statement claims, without qualification, the existence and use of recording devices by DePree. The second statement provides the qualification "perceived." Williams' logic suffers from presenting the statements in improper order, constituting another example of the slipshod way in which CoB administrators do things. *Sources tell USMNEWS.NET that testimony was introduced in federal court on 28-Sept-07 (in DePree v. Saunders, et al.) indicating that DePree has not recorded anyone at USM.*

The last paragraph of page 1 of Williams' memo ignores several key facts. First, Jim Henderson is almost never in his office engaging in scholarship. Henderson spends a significant portion of his week on the 18 at the Hattiesburg Country Club.³



Jim Henderson



Roderick Posey

² For more on Clark, see [Just Another "I" in "EFIB"](#), [Salary Paid Per Student Credit Hour Taught](#) and [Don't Like Your Teaching Schedule? Change It!](#).

³ For more about Henderson, see [Get to Know Jim Henderson](#) and [If Posey Gets to be a Full, Why Can't Henderson?](#).

Former SAIS Director Rod Posey also refuses to put significant effort into scholarly activity.⁴ A Google search turns up fewer than 5 publications for Posey *over a 30+ year career!* Despite this fact, Posey continues to claim more than 100 publications right there on the USM website, for the world to see.

At the May 4, 2007 College of Business faculty meeting, Dr. DePree engaged in disruptive behavior by cursing and storming out of the meeting in a manner that left faculty members fearful. This unbelievable tirade and outburst made most College of Business faculty members nervous, fearful, and at the very least, uneasy about his presence in meetings. In fact, a number of faculty have expressed reluctance to attend the first faculty meeting of the fall 2007 semester, if Dr. DePree is in attendance. Due to his behavior at the May meeting, plans are already underway to have the University Police on standby for the August 31st faculty meeting. Faculty members should not have to fear for their safety when attending regularly scheduled University meetings and functions. Police presence should not be necessary for a faculty meeting.

In paragraph 1 of page 2 (shown above), Williams neglects to mention to Saunders that, at the end of the 4 May 2007 CoB faculty meeting, assistant professor of economics, Sami Dakhliya, read a proclamation attacking DePree. Dakhliya's proclamation was *not* part of the meeting agenda, yet Williams knew that the proclamation would be read, and that it would likely provoke DePree.⁵ Sources have indicated to USMNEWS.NET that Dakhliya's proclamation was a "set up," and that DePree's reaction to it was later used (in August of 2007) to relieve DePree from his teaching and service responsibilities to the CoB.



Sami Dakhliya

Sources also tell USMNEWS.NET that DePree's reaction to Dakhliya's proclamation was much more subdued than is described in Williams' letter, and that this point was made during the 27-Sept-07 federal court proceedings.

⁴ For more on Posey's *choice* to snub academic research, see [Can't? Or, Won't?](#). For more on Posey's "more than 100" publications claim, see [Bad Information In, Wrong Choice Out](#) and [The "Help Rod Posey Find His Tale" Contest](#).

⁵ For more on Dakhliya's failure to achieve tenure at UofAL, and his political activities since joining the CoB in August of 2006, see [ECONewbies](#), [The Case for the Dakhliya-Marvasti 2007 Merit Raise Gets Worse](#), [Did Dakhliya and Marvasti Hit the Powerball?](#), and [Sami Dakhliya: Deluded or Disingenuous?](#).

To conclude Part I of this series, it should be pointed out that on 28-Sept-07 Williams' co-defendant, former CoB Dean Harold Doty, threatened a witness from the 27-Sept-07 federal court proceedings. About 10 days have passed since that episode and Williams has yet to make his "investigation" of that event public. While police presence should not be necessary, in Williams' words, to conduct a CoB faculty meeting, it should certainly never be required to protect one CoB faculty member from another in the JGH hallways during a weekday morning while students move to and from their business classes.

In Part II of this series, we will examine the remaining portions of Williams' memo to Saunders.