

Special Report

Sleepy Hollow – More on AJW & AACSB

An Investigative Series on CoB Faculty Research Credentials

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 10 – Faculty Qualifications." The CoB's support in the development of junior faculties' research agenda was found by the AACSB Peer Review Team in 2007 to be woefully inadequate.

Standard 10 – Faculty Qualifications

One way to address these concerns, Williams believed, was to have other CoB departments emulate the "EFIB Fridays" seminar series being conducted by assistant professor of economics, Sami Dakhli. Supporting this contention is the fact that Williams made two major points at a CoB faculty meeting (after the AACSB's 6th Year Review decision was handed down). First, he said he (Williams) wanted to see, via individual webpages, each CoB professor's vitae posted to the CoB website at www.usm.edu. Second, and more important to this report, Williams indicated that he wanted to see the CoB's other departments (SAIS, MGT&MKT and TM) develop a weekly seminar series similar to the one run by the EFIB's Dakhli. Williams added that he (Williams) wanted to see each of these completed by the end of the 2007-08 academic year. The insert below shows what Williams and the CoB's administrative team told AACSB, in the CoB's Oct-07 6th Year Review Report, in this regard.

Faculty Research

Efforts are underway to enrich the overall research culture and atmosphere in the College of Business. One example of this is the Friday Seminar Series hosted by the Department of Economics, Finance, and International Business. This series allows a forum for current faculty and individuals from other universities to present their research. Comments, discussions, and critiques from this venue allow authors to strengthen manuscripts prior to journal submissions. Due to the success of this program, all academic units in the College have been requested to implement similar initiatives. Funds to support the research series are made available to the units from the Dean's Office. The key outcomes of the seminar series are the quantity of manuscripts published, as well as the quality of outlets targeted for publication.

According to Williams, "[d]ue to the success of [the "EFIB Fridays" seminar series] program, all academic units have been requested to implement similar initiatives. Funds to support the research series are made available to the units from the Dean's

Office.” Despite Williams’ request, not a single one of the CoB’s non-ECO academic units has, by 1-May-2008, implemented a seminar series initiative that is in any way similar to Dakhliya’s program in the EFIB.¹

As for Dakhliya’s program in the EFIB, despite Williams’ declaration that it has been “success[ful],” there is no objective evidence to indicate that Dakhliya’s program has resulted in anything more than massive amounts of pizza consumption. According to sources, the “EFIB Fridays” serving of pizzas and soft drinks constitutes the main reason for attendance by a significant portion of the series’ weekly attendees. And, the research that is presented there often ranges from papers presented by graduate students from nearby universities who are seeking to improve their presentation skills for the academic job market to near decade-old research papers/results presented by former EFIB economist Charlie Sawyer. Included among this array is the CoB’s Center for Economic Education Director, Ms. Susan Doty, who has presented work related to her primary/secondary teacher-training camps around South Mississippi. Sprinkled in between have been presentations by EFIB economists Daniel Monchuk, Dakhliya, and Akbar Marvasti, none of which seems to be leading to publication of any significant sort (as so many reports here at USMNEWS.NET can attest). To add more to the program’s weaknesses has been the noticeable absence from the presentation docket of those more senior economists in the EFIB who so often promote the prominence of their own research reputations. Finally, sources tell USMNEWS.NET that, in a description to CoB faculty of his own attendance at an “EFIB Fridays” event, Williams remarked that the research being presented was, for the most part, unintelligible, but the pizza was good.

Based on the evidence, as it exists on 1-May-08, this appears to be a clear case of Williams telling the AACSB what he thinks it is that they (the AACSB) want to hear. Williams’ own “soft request” of the CoB (at the faculty meeting) to develop other weekly seminar series (and to put faculty vitae on the Internet) seems to have simply been an attempt to cover his 6th Year Review Report bases.

¹ The lack of participation cannot be due to lack of financial resources, as Williams’ statement to the AACSB makes clear. It is also noteworthy that, at this time, none of the CoB’s vitae are linked to the USM website.