

Special Report

Was Harold Doty Fired by USM?

His Own Words and Behavior Say He Was

The official line from USM on 9-April-07, 10-April-07 and thereafter was and has been that former CoB Dean, Harold Doty, resigned from the position on 9-April-07. Despite such proclamations from the top execs at USM, a recent [report](#) published here at USMNEWS.NET that contains a more complete text of EFIB Chair George Carter's public denigration of Doty was used in a *31st & Pearl* [column](#) to make a quite convincing case that Doty was instead fired. Now, with the recent release of internal CoB documents, USMNEWS.NET reporters have access to Doty's own correspondence, much of which supports the case made by the *31st & Pearl* columnist – that Doty did not resign on 9-April-07, he was fired.

Long-time readers of USMNEWS.NET will recall that the CoB's AACSB Maintenance of Accreditation visit took place at the beginning of February of 2007. As chronicled contemporaneously, and later on, by our reporters, that particular visit didn't go as smoothly as USM officials would have liked. The result, which arrived in March of 2007, was a "6th Year Review" for the CoB, not a clean 5-year extension of accreditation from the AACSB. Much of the correspondence obtained by USMNEWS.NET through a Freedom of Information Act request covers the time period between the February of 2007 AACSB Peer Review Team's visit and the March of 2007 decision from the AACSB.

From: Harold Doty [mailto:Harold.Doty@usm.edu]
Sent: Tue 2/6/2007 5:14 PM
To: 'Cummings, Ted'; 'Garceau, Linda R.'; Danny Arnold; 'Edward Arrington CEARRING'; tarnoffk@etsu.edu
Subject: Feedback about visit from our administration

I would like to thank the team for the wonderful job you must have done on the exit interview with the President and Provost. You helped them understand that we have accomplished many good things and have made outstanding progress in the last few years. I'm sure they would have preferred a 5 year extension, but they understand that your report was a positive report on the college and that the 6th year visit is to make sure that we can maintain our trajectory and clean up the loose ends.

Thanks
hd

The e-mail inserted above was sent by Doty to members of the CoB's AACSB PRT on 6-Feb-07. In it Doty congratulates members of the PRT for successfully conveying to USM President Shelby Thames and USM Provost Jay Grimes that the CoB's forthcoming 6th Year Review designation from AACSB was not an academic death penalty. This e-mail establishes the fact that Doty knew, by as early as 6-Feb-07, that the AACSB had determined that the CoB's 2007

Maintenance of Accreditation attempt warranted a 6th Year Review. Not only that, Doty used the “6th year” term himself, despite later attempts to convince CoB faculty and staff that such a designation from AACSB did not actually exist. Finally, a close reading of Doty’s e-mail also, as was the case for our sources, sounds a lot like a “thank you for saving my job [at least temporarily] during your discussions with Thames and Grimes” expression from Doty to members of the PRT.

From: Harold Doty [mailto:Harold.Doty@usm.edu]
Sent: Friday, February 16, 2007 8:24 AM
To: Cummings, Ted
Subject: Contact with Jerry Trapnell at AACSB

Ted,

I wanted to be sure you knew that I am in close contact with Jerry Trapnell at AACSB. Please be sure you talk to him regarding our Peer report. I am sorry for the complications, but some things are beyond my control.

We are already beginning to address some of the issues you raised, and look forward to the detailed guidance you will be providing. I really do believe we will make even more progress with you help.

I hope you have completely recovered from the illness you contracted while you were here. That’s normally not part of the Southern Miss experience!

The e-mail above was sent by Doty to Ted Cummings, the Chair of the CoB’s PRT, on 16-Feb-07. In this e-mail, sent by Doty *only 53 days* prior to resigning his post as CoB Dean, Doty informs Cummings that he (Doty) is in “close contact” with Jerry Trapnell, a high-ranking AACSB official, about the CoB’s PRT Report. Doty requests that Cummings also maintain close contact with Trapnell, and he (Doty) then informs Cummings that CoB officials “are already beginning to address some of the issues” raised by the PRT, and that Doty “look[s] forward to the detailed guidance” that Cummings will be providing.

From: Harold Doty [mailto:Harold.Doty@usm.edu]
Sent: Monday, March 05, 2007 2:31 PM
To: Cummings, Ted
Subject: AACSB report

Ted,

How is our report progressing? I am now rested, recharged, and ready to begin moving the college forward again. I think the feedback in the report will be very helpful.

hd

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On the afternoon of 5-March-07, *only 36 days* prior to resigning his post as CoB Dean, Doty pestered (via the e-mail inserted above) PRT Chair Cummings for

news on the progression of the CoB's impending accreditation report – a report Doty already knew was going to require that the CoB complete a 6th Year Review (not good news). As the e-mail states, Doty is anxious to get to work on the 6th Year Review process, having gotten himself (somehow) “rested, recharged, and ready to begin moving the [CoB] forward again.” Within one hour of receiving Doty's e-mail, Cummings responded and informed Doty that Trapnell was meeting with AACSB lawyers about the CoB's report and that the letter Doty requested would be finalized that very afternoon.

"Harold Doty" <Harold.Doty@usm.edu>
03/06/2007 04:46 PM

To "Edward Arrington CEARRING" <cearring@uncg.edu>
cc
Subject RE: maintenance of accounting accreditation team visit report

Thanks Ed. I appreciate all of the help we have received from you and the rest of the team. If you know of anybody who would like to be an Accounting Director please tell them about our position. I have the position open, and the Provost has cleared a salary up to 175 K. I need somebody good!

hd

D. Harold Doty

The next day, 6-March-07, *only 35 days* prior to resigning as CoB Dean, Doty e-mailed (see insert above) Ed Arrington, a member of the CoB's AACSB PRT, to thank him (Arrington) for his work with the CoB's Maintenance of Accreditation visit. Doty also takes the opportunity to let Arrington know that the CoB is seeking a new Accounting Director and that Grimes “has cleared a salary up to 175 K.” Doty then exclaims: “I need somebody good!”¹

Having failed to receive the PRT's letter by 9-March-07, *only 32 days* prior to Doty's resignation, Doty once again pestered Cummings (via e-mail) about the status of the letter. In that e-mail, which is inserted below, Doty informs Cummings that “it would be very helpful to have [the letter] early next week.” According to Doty, “next week” is “Spring Break [at USM],” and he (Doty) “will have a significant amount of time to develop [the CoB's] plan of attack.” To this e-mail Cummings responded (also on 9-March-07) that “one additional change” had to be made to the letter, and then it would be in Doty's hands on Monday, 12-March-07. So, as this exchange indicates, Doty planned to use his Spring

¹ Arrington is an accountant by training, and he served on the CoB's Accounting PRT. According to sources, Doty's comments seem to be an attempt at gauging Arrington's interest in the position. If so, Doty would have been dangling a potential *quid pro quo* opportunity before Arrington.

Break (2007) to get a head start on the CoB's 6th Year Review process (for the AACSB).

From: Harold Doty [mailto:Harold.Doty@usm.edu]
Sent: Friday, March 09, 2007 1:50 PM
To: Cummings, Ted
Subject: RE: AACSB report

Ted,

I still have not received the business school report (but have received the accounting report). It would be very helpful if I have it early next week. It is spring break here and I actually will have a significant amount of time to develop our plan of attack. Hope you don't end up working over your spring break!

hd

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USM's Spring Break fell on 12-, 13-, 14-, 15- and 16-March-07, dates that also put Doty working (excitedly) on the CoB's 6th Year Review *only 29, 28, 27, 26, and 25 days* prior to submitting his resignation as CoB Dean.

As Doty's e-mail indicates, he was anxious and excited about adding the completion of the CoB's 6th Year Review to his vitae. As close as *3.5 weeks* prior to submitting his resignation to the top brass at USM - a move that shocked the USM community - Doty was pestering AACSB PRT Chair Cummings about delays in the process. Does this sound like the behavior of someone who was planning to submit a resignation in a matter of days? It doesn't sound so to USMNEWS.NET sources. To them, this and other reports available here at USMNEWS.NET point to one conclusion - on 9-April-07, Doty was fired by Thames and Grimes, and possibly even also by USM President-Appointee (at that time), Martha Saunders.