

Special Report

‘The English House Call’

How One USM English Faculty Sees no *Extra* in *Extracurricular*

The recent USMNEWS.net report entitled [USM 'Sends a Terrible Message' to College Co-Eds](#) lays the groundwork for a multi-part series on the Davida Williams v. USM, Rex Stamper, et al. case that was brought to Forrest County Circuit Court back in 1996. Williams alleged in the suit that USM officials wrongly and malevolently prevented her from receiving her doctorate degree, and caused her serious mental and emotional anguish. Williams also alleged that USM English professor Rex Stamper sexually harassed her over a relatively lengthy period of time.

This *Special Report* examines more of the 2005 court documents regarding the Williams-Stamper situation. Consider the court text below:

The primary focus of the present case is [Rex] Stamper's conduct as a professor and as the chair of [Davida] Williams's doctoral committee. The secondary focus is the general lack of attention and seriousness shown by a number of USM professors and officials to Williams's reports of improper and unwarranted sexual misconduct. Williams testified that Stamper's conduct as a faculty member towards her between 1985 and 1987 was "flirty" but not "harmful." However, after Stamper had become chair of her dissertation committee, that began to change. Williams testified at trial that Stamper's conduct became "sexual harassment," which included, among other things: office visits which often turned sexual in nature; telephone calls to her home; a lewd and vulgar Valentine card placed by Stamper into Williams's university mailbox in February 1989; and eventually, in 1990, the sexual assault.

Stamper acknowledged in his testimony that he went to Williams's home between twenty-five and thirty times for reasons related to his academic duties and his chairmanship of Williams's dissertation. In addition to these trips to Williams's home, Stamper also conceded and admitted that he visited in the homes of between 100 and 200 students, male and female, during his 20 year tenure at USM. Stamper also testified that he and Williams had engaged in consensual sexual relations, which Williams denied.

The portion of the court documents highlighted above describes what some are calling “the English house call.” According to Stamper’s testimony, he visited the homes of 100 to 200 – let’s say 150 – students while a USM English professor for 20 years. He claims to have visited Williams’ home 25 to 30 times. Using 27 visits per student, and 150 students visited, then based on the testimony

summarized above, Stamper may have made more than 4,000 “English house calls” while working for USM for 20 years. If half of these students, or 75, were USM co-eds, then Stamper may have visited his female students’ homes on more than 2,000 occasions. If one assumes that Stamper had relations with one-quarter of these co-eds, or 19 of them, and that he had these relations on one-half of the visits he made to their homes, then he may have had more than 250 in-home sexual encounters with USM co-eds over the same 20 years.

One would think that this kind of “Stamper math” would make USM administrators nervous. It certainly seems to corroborate the comments made by online readers of *The Hattiesburg American* – some of whom appear to be graduates of the English program(s) – that some of the USM English professors seem to think it “cool” and “chic” to carry on extracurricular activities with each other and with their students.