

Student-Teacher Evaluations: Just How Abusive and Dishonest Can Administrators Get?

A recent article from Inside Higher Ed, "[Rate My Professor – For Real](#)," (Colleen Flaherty) reminded me, not of potential student misuse of student-teacher evaluations, but how administrators actually misuse and abuse faculty with student-teacher evaluations.

We learned about abusive and dishonest administrators in their own words by deposing them under oath. Let's consider the case of Roderick Posey, one time faculty and administrator at the University of Southern Mississippi:

The following is the actual sworn testimony of Roderick Burl Posey, taken on June 10, 2008, in the case, *DePree v. University of Southern Mississippi* (Q. is my attorney's questions directed to Posey; A. is Posey's responses):

Q. At some point ... you [Posey] seized upon two negative comments [in DePree's student teacher evaluations] by certain -- by two students [from over 100 evaluations] to level some criticism at Marc; is that correct?

MR. HOOKS (USM attorney): Object to the form of the question.

MR. FOUNTAIN: Q. Do you understand my question?

A. I understand your question. I believe I mentioned two of the comments. The problem with Marc's evaluation was not that. **It was that the students**, going through them [DePree's student teacher evaluations], **mentioned nowhere that his course was difficult**. Going through, whatever, 100 evaluation... **Marc's had nothing ... where the student said, boy, he is a good teacher... but this is a tough class. It just wasn't there... they said nothing about him [Marc] being a difficult teacher...**

Q. **So you were looking to students to tell you this [DePree's] is a difficult course to tell you what? You are willing to live with the answer you've given me?**

A. **Uh-huh. [Affirmative]**

Q. I hand you a document and ask you if you can identify that?

A. This is from Marc to me, March 4, 2004. This is comments on his faculty activity report **and demonstration of rigor**.

Q. And attached to that I think you will find Marc's student comments for the period of time that was covered by that evaluation.

- A. Okay.
- Q. Look at Number 5 and read it for me, please.
- A. He [DePree] needs to slow down a little. He goes a little fast for normal students.
- Q. Read the positive comments, Number 5.
- A. Number 5, [DePree] Explains content with clarity, difficult course but made the material fun and interesting.
- Q. So there is one student that said it was a difficult course.
- A. **One student.**
- Q. Okay. Well, let's look at 11.
- A. Eleven, this material was difficult to learn but repetitive use of material was very helpful.
- Q. Let's look at 42.
- A. This professor [DePree] is the first professor I had -- I have had that could teach a class that is difficult and still make it relevant, informative, and enjoyable. I wish USM had more of his caliber.
- Q. Let's look at 44.
- A. Thoroughly enjoyed this [DePree's] class. He presented difficult material in a way that you could follow and learn.
- Q. How about 48? [Editor's note: *Posey was furious at this point.*]
- A. Dr. DePree has the ability to take an incredibly complex subject and break it down into logical steps. His method of teaching is wonderful. I really learn what he says instead of memorizing it.
- Q. Let's look at Number 57, what's it say?
- A. His [DePree's] ability to explain. The patience he used while teaching. Explaining the complicated material until you understand...

My attorney could have continued for an hour but he made the point.

Let me repeat what Posey said under oath. **"Marc's [DePree] had nothing ... where the student said, boy, he is a good teacher... but this is a tough class. It just wasn't there..."**

they said nothing about him [Marc] being a difficult teacher..." As an administrator, Posey had, without accountability, made false annual evaluations of DePree.

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Take a look at Rod Posey's testimony and answer that question for yourself.