

The Axis of Awful

A Guest Editorial

The story of the saga involving a handful of East Texas universities, and the cadre of former USM administrators that appears to be damaging them, has been a hot item on this website. That cadre of former USM executives – former USM provost Tim Hudson, former USM vice president for finance Gregg Lassen, former USM business college dean Harold Doty, former USM health college dean Peter Fos, former USM business college associate dean Farhang Niroomand, and former USM MBA director Stephen Bushardt – worked at USM during, if not before, the Shelby Thames administration (2002-07). From USM, Hudson took over the presidency of the University of Houston – Victoria. Hudson later brought over Niroomand, who took the top business school position at UH-V. Fos took the provost's position at the University of Texas – Tyler; Lassen went there as vice president of business affairs. These two brought Doty over to lead the UT-T business school. Doty then reeled in old friend Bushardt to manage the UT-T management department.



Each of these administrators has a sketchy past at USM. Lassen is a graduate of the now *infamous* USM PhD program in international affairs (i.e., economic

development). His major professor in this largely online program was none other than then-USM business dean Harold Doty. This, of course, is only *part* of the story of *just two* of these individuals. The pages here at USMNEWS.net are full of other stories on these two, as well as multiple reports and editorials covering the activities of most, if not all, of the others in the group.

Once all of these former USM officials were in East Texas, the dominos began to fall. First up was Hudson, who mysteriously vacated the UH-V presidency in order to move into the UH System office in Houston. There he is reportedly an assistant to the UHS chancellor and president Renu Khator, and his primary responsibility is international programs development. Sources note, however, that Hudson's move to the UHS office is simply one that facilitates Khator's baby-sitting job vis-à-vis Hudson, who reportedly ran into some "spending" trouble involving Niroomand and international travel. Imagine that.

Up north in Tyler, Lassen and Fos landed in UT-T president Rod Mabry's dog house, according to sources, for their part in bringing Doty from USM to UT-T. It seems Doty has been causing all sorts of mayhem since hitting the ground in Tyler, part of which includes bringing Bushardt from Spring Hill College to UT-T, and Mabry began running afoul with members of the larger UT-T community because of it. For a taste of this chaotic situation, check out the more recent updates to USMNEWS.net. Lassen responded by jaunting to Lamar University in Beaumont, TX, in the middle of spring semester 2011. Fos informed Mabry and the UT-T family that he, too, would be leaving UT-T. His destination would be New Orleans, at least according to reports.

Doty and Bushardt remain at UT-T, though only tenuously so. Reports are now that Mabry may be allowing Doty to use the remainder of this academic year to find a position elsewhere. Niroomand remains atop the b-school at UH-V, again only barely so. It seems, from sources at least, that Niroomand is up to his old "intimidation" tactics, and that a growing anti-Niroomand sentiment now exists in the UH-V business school. As the blue figure in the map of Texas above indicates, an axis of awful is running through four cities. It seems that the old Thames administration of USM spawned a number of *agents provocateurs* who are mowing their way through university after university in East Texas. How many accreditations will be lost, and tenure-track faculty unjustly terminated, as a result of these USM implants remains to be seen.