

The Doty Sidestep: How to Bypass Faculty Governance

From July 1, 2003, until April 9, 2007, Duane Harold Doty was the dean of the College of Business and Economic Development/College of Business at the University of Southern Mississippi. A hallmark of the Doty regime was actively seeking to circumvent faculty governance processes when those processes threatened to limit Doty's ability to finalize "check boxes" on his dean's resume. "The Doty Sidestep: How to Bypass Faculty Governance" is a multi-part series highlighting some of Doty's most egregious efforts to put his wants above the mission of USM and the governance processes that protect USM faculty.

The series is a cautionary tale for those who might consider allowing Doty a second chance at managing a business school.

Part 4: Letter of Agreement

In many ways, the beginning of Doty's fall from administrative grace in the CoB began with his participation in the now-infamous Letter of Agreement for then-Associate Professor of Management David Duhon in 2004. Duhon, an Associate Professor who effectively stopped conducting research when he was tenured and promoted, desired the prestige and salary "bump" that accompanies Full Professor status.

Of course, this type of promotion usually follows a number of productive years that involve teaching and research excellence beyond what is required for promotion to Associate Professor. A usual candidate would delay seeking promotion until he or she felt certain that his or her accomplishments warranted promotion; Duhon felt no such obligation and resisted performing the research duties necessary to truly earn a promotion. Duhon claimed that his service to the college (as a faculty senator) had claimed his research time and that he should be given a break because he was, in essence, a "team player." In fairness, Duhon's service was perfunctory at best and harmful to faculty governance at worst. Additionally, Duhon was widely considered an average teacher and, as outlined below, a below-average researcher at best.

In 2004, Doty, Duhon, and Chairman of Marketing and Management Alvin Williams came to an agreement regarding exactly what Duhon would have to achieve in order to gain Doty's stamp of approval for promotion, which consisted of two proceedings and two publications (no quality requirement specified). One year later, in Fall 2005, Duhon applied for promotion to Full Professor with exactly two low-quality publications and two low-quality proceedings to his credit.

Almost immediately, Duhon began going door-to-door in the Management and Marketing Department, meeting with the existing Full Professors in that department. The purpose of those meetings was to discuss his application for promotion and to inform those faculty members of the existence of the Letter of Agreement with Doty. Multiple M&M faculty have since reported that, regardless of their personal appraisals of Duhon's promotion portfolio or his worthiness, they considered Duhon a shoo-in for promotion from that point forward. No doubt Doty's letter was intended to chill dissent from those who might provide a negative assessment for Duhon's accomplishments.

Subsequently, Duhon's application sped through the CoB processes, again bolstered by the Letter of Agreement (which some touted as a contract). At the University Advisory Committee level, however, the promotion hit a wall, as the committee reportedly trashed Duhon's portfolio as the sham it was. Eventually, Duhon would gain promotion to Full Professor after Doty, Williams, and Management Professor Stephen Bushardt [in the words of George Carter] went to former USM Provost Jay Grimes, "the provost who's known for caving [to pressure]" and put enough political and legal pressure on him that he "caved." And George Carter would know about all this, since he was a member of Doty's administrative team AND a "personal friend" of Duhon.

In retrospect, the fault lies with Duhon for seeking the easy route to promotion. But it also lies with Doty, and Doty's culpability is much more pronounced. Rather than simply making the following statement to Duhon back in 2004:

I'll support you when the majority of Full Professors of Management and Marketing support you. You need to do enough research to earn their respect and support.

Doty saw the opportunity to gain control over a faculty member; as long as Duhon needed Doty's favor, Duhon would act as Doty's puppet, and this illustrates another character flaw of Doty's. Doty is a user. He will use anyone he thinks can play any part in his advancement, whether or not the "using" is detrimental to the one being used. In the end, Duhon got his promotion, but he lost any modicum of respect he had gained in a fifteen-year career at USM and he lost his reputation as a "nice guy." Doty, on the other hand, got Duhon's support and Duhon's effort in politicking for Doty's proposals. Both now occupy a wasteland of a college that they helped create.

Why couldn't Doty simply give Duhon the appropriate response and allow the established faculty processes to proceed? The answer lies in the fact that Doty repeatedly demonstrated that he held his personal welfare in significantly higher esteem than the welfare of the college and the university that he was hired to serve.