

A 31st & Pearl Special Series

The Duhon Standard

A Look at How the CoB is Governed by Exceptions, not Rules

It was only a few short years ago that then-associate professor of management, David Duhon, approached then-MGT & MKT chairman, Alvin Williams, and then-CBED/CoB dean, Harold Doty, to request detailed information on what it would take for Duhon to receive their support for his promotion-to-full application. Duhon had submitted at least one application during the William Gunther administration (1998-2003) that wasn't well-received. His research record was weak, to say the least, and this time Duhon wanted firm guidance. Instead of presenting Duhon with a crisp, clean copy of *Enhancing Faculty Productivity* (the CoB's faculty handbook) and instructing him to reacquaint himself with it, as they should have done, Williams and Doty took it upon themselves to draw up a plan wherein Duhon was to publish a handful of additional journal articles, one of which was already accounted for by a "forthcoming" pedagogical paper on Duhon's record at that time.

The plan for Duhon came to be known as a "letter of agreement" (LOA) between Duhon and these b-school administrators. Duhon's mentor, former CoB management professor Stephen Bushardt (now of Spring Hill College), told various CoB faculty that only two or three such agreements had been effected during his 25-year tenure in USM's business school. Williams, whose USM career spanned even longer, told others that he had never been part of such an agreement before. Despite these proclamations, Bushardt and others continued to claim that Duhon was not being accorded any special treatment (even though Bushardt told some CoBers that Duhon's LOA would likely hold up in court as a contractual agreement). Yet, at the moment that Williams and Doty decided not to present Duhon with *EFP*, they began according him with nothing but special treatment.

These days Duhon is a full professor of management. His LOA worked out for him in the end. Never mind that the University Advisory Council rejected Duhon's application. That small hurdle was taken care of by Bushardt, former CoB MGT & MKT chairman, Barry Babin, and any others who joined the Sprink Break entourage that walked over to the Lucas Administration Building to convince then-USM provost, Jay Grimes, that Duhon had a legal case for promotion. As EFIB chairman, George Carter, instructed us all, Grimes was and is a "caver." Grimes

"caved," and Duhon rose. Yes, not only is Duhon a full professor these days, he now holds the administrative position Williams once held (chair of MGT & MKT), *as well as* the distinguished professorship title that was once Williams' (*Kaetsu Distinguished Professor of International Business*). Neither Williams nor Duhon holds the proper credentials for such a professorship, but that's another "special case" story for another time. Isn't it now time, however, that the CoB is no longer governed by exceptions?

31st & Pearl is a series housed at usmnews.net that features commentary on aspects of life in the CoB from a variety of columnists.