

**The Black Friday Memo Revisited:  
Were we blinded by trickery or our own prejudices?**

On Friday, February 4, 2005, Harold Doty read portions of a memo from USM Provost Jay Grimes that detailed a number of issues regarding a (then) recent meeting between Grimes, Doty, Associate Provost Cynthia Moore, (then) USMGC COO Ken Malone, and Farhang Niroomand. There was a seven item agenda for the meeting, six of which were actually discussed during the meeting. The final issue discussed that day, the CoB's research focus, drew sharp criticism from CoB faculty, USM faculty, and was a lightning rod when the letter was published in the Hattiesburg American.

The administrative admonition regarding research agendas was inappropriate and should have led to a censure of Grimes. Lost in the chaotic period that followed were the other five items addressed in the meeting upon which the letter was based. Below is an item discussed in that letter. Let's see what our current level of information and perspective gives us.

**Issue 2: Economic Education**

"We discussed the commitment made by Southern Miss to create an economic education center or institute for K-12 students in South Mississippi. I recalled that at the September 13, 2004 luncheon attended by you, President Shelby Thames, Dean W. Lee Pierce, Dr. Ted Alexander, Dr. Pam Smith, and myself you said that you did not have any faculty that would be interested in the economic education program and that none of your planned searches would include a faculty member with this expertise. Because of this lack of CoB support, President Thames instructed me in the presence of Dr. Alexander to develop a plan for implementing an economic education program at Southern Miss. I later told you that Dr. Ken Malone and I met with Drs. Pam Smith and Ted Alexander on two occasions (once at Gulf park and once at Jackson, MS on December 21, 2004) to develop such a plan and that the Department of economic Development in the College of Science and Technology was, with my approval, conducting a national search for a faculty position. All of us in attendance at the 2 January meeting agreed that (i) I would talk to Dr. Pam Smith about discussions between herself and Dr. Doty and (ii) Ken Malone and I would discuss with President Thames the proper placement of this program in the university. I have never authorized you to proceed with implementing this program."<sup>i</sup>

CoB Dean Harold Doty answered the Grimes' memo above via a February 4, 2005, letter of his own, that was shortly thereafter published in the Hattiesburg American. Below is Doty's response, via letter, to the economics education issues raised in Grimes' memo.

"I take exception to your statement that there was a lack of CoB support for the K-12 economic education program. A review of the facts reveals that the CoB has been the driving force behind the economic education efforts in the southern part of the state on behalf of Southern Miss for an extended period.

Our initial efforts in late 2003 resulted in a funding proposal submitted to the Vice President of Research and Economic Development under the cover of the College of Education and Psychology. This routing was necessary because the person best able to deliver the program, Susan Doty, is my spouse. The request for funding was denied by the university. The next effort at establishing this program began when I initiated a meeting between myself, Pam Smith, and Ted Alexander. As a consequence of this meeting, Dr. Smith and Dr. Alexander met with Ms. Doty. Drs. Smith and Alexander concluded that Ms. Doty was the ideal person to deliver economic education programs and agreed with Ms. Doty to move forward. The College of Business, represented by Ms. Doty, initiated the program on Economic Education at Southern Miss when Ms. Doty participated in her first seminar on or about September 2, 2004.

Your statement that I 'said that [I] did not have any faculty that would be interested in the economic education' is factually incorrect. I did state that the person who had initially agreed to nominally guide the program did not express sufficient interest in the program. Further, I did state that I had not yet identified another faculty member to lead the program, nor had I begun selling the idea to another faculty member. Finally, I did state that none of the CoB planned searches would explicitly include a faculty member with primary expertise in economic education. That statement was based on my professional opinion that hiring such an assistant professor who would not join the university for almost a year was a poor use of resources and would slow the development of the program. It appears that the empirical evidence supports my professional opinion. I have a current CoB faculty member with a Ph.D. in economics who has agreed to serve as head of the economic education program. I have implemented an organizational structure approved by representatives from the Mississippi Council on Economic Education. The CoB was actively involved in the economic education program before the September 13 meeting and has continued to develop and deliver the program for several months. In January 2005 alone the CoB participated in the delivery of five seminars that delivered economic education to over 100 K-12 teachers. When I informed you and President Thames with the good news that the CoB was actively involved with the economic education program I received a reply from President Thames thanking me for sharing the good news. My understanding is that, to date, the Department of Economic Development has made no progress and has delivered no economic education to K-12 teachers.

Your statement that you informed me of two meetings that included Drs. Malone, Grimes, Smith, and Alexander is misleading. It is true that I was informed of these two meetings; however I was not informed by you of these meetings until our discussion on January 21, 2005. To imply that I knew of the two meetings prior to January 21, 2005 is inappropriate.

Your statement that you have never authorized me to implement this program is factually incorrect. In late October, 2004 I met with you in your office to discuss the strategic plan for the business school. At this meeting I explicitly discussed the progress the CoB was making on the economic education program and our future plans. At the conclusion of this meeting you instructed me to continue with all of the plans we had discussed. Specifically, you told me that there was nothing we (the CoB) were currently doing that we should not be doing, and there was nothing we were not doing that we should be doing. You acknowledged your previous statement in our meeting on January 21, 2005.

The second time you approved this program was when I presented the strategic plan for the business school to President Thames in late November. Please review the documents and you will see that economic education was explicitly included in the presentation. At the end of my presentation you were explicitly asked by President Thames if you had any problems with the plans. You said you would like to "chew" on the plan for a while, but if you had any objections you would let me know within one week. To date, you have expressed no objections to the plan I presented. Given your statement, I believe that the lack of stated objections constitutes approval.

The third time you approved my implementation of the economic education program was at the end of the meeting on January 21. With Drs. Niroomand, Moore, and Malone present, I explicitly asked if we (the CoB) should move forward with our efforts in economic education. You replied affirmatively. I believe your exact words were 'yes, we don't want to stop anything we're doing.'"<sup>ii</sup>

Why was this an issue? By fall semester 2004, Doty had successfully alienated many CoB faculty and had run Economic Development out of the CBED, creating the CoB. Doty had especially marginalized the few economists capable of running a center for economics education. In fact, the individual to whom Doty refers as having "initially agreed to nominally guide the program" (1) was the second person approached for the position, and (2) carried no real "economics education" credential(s). Furthermore, the "initial agreement" made by this individual was one of consent to guide the program as figurehead only. The person currently at the head of the Bureau of Business Research, the parent organization for the CoB's Center for Economic Education, is also not an economics education scholar.

However, there is a curious issue regarding economic education at USM, one raised earlier at usmpride. In "Quotable Doty Part 2" it is uncovered that Doty and his wife Susan are involved in the Mississippi Council for Economic Education (MCEE) and that the MCEE's lead educator is, in fact, Susan Doty. Susan Doty apparently conducts seminars on economics education for pay through the MCEE. It would seem, then, that what Doty was trying to do in preceding any movement in economics education (EE) that was outside of his sphere of influence was to make sure that his wife Susan became an integral part of the K-12 EE delivery system. Support for this contention comes from Doty's own explanation of events to Provost Jay Grimes:

"A review of the facts reveals that the CoB has been the driving force behind the economic education efforts in the southern part of the state on behalf of Southern Miss for an extended period. Our initial efforts in late 2003 resulted in a funding proposal submitted to the Vice President of Research and Economic Development under the cover of the College of Education and Psychology. This routing was necessary because the person best able to deliver the program, Susan Doty, is my spouse. The request for funding was denied by the university."

As the letter states, Dean Doty had both the Center for EE and his wife Susan as lead educator in his mind very early on in his tenure at USM, and possibly before he arrived at USM. To secure his wife's place in the program, he even submitted a funding proposal through the College of

Education and Psychology. Funding the program under the auspices of the CoEP indicates that all Doty needed was a figurehead to "nominally" guide the K-12 EE delivery system.

Thus, if we read a little into Grimes' letter, it could appear that Grimes is peeved because Doty is committing insubordination for personal financial gain, a double whammy.

Another aspect of the interchange is interesting in this regard. At the end of his memo, Grimes writes to Doty:

"I have never authorized you to proceed with implementing this program."

Doty takes issue with this statement. In his response letter, Doty writes:

"Your statement that you have never authorized me to implement this program is factually incorrect. In late October, 2004 I met with you in your office to discuss the strategic plan for the business school. At this meeting I explicitly discussed the progress the CoB was making on the economic education program and our future plans. At the conclusion of this meeting you instructed me to continue with all of the plans we had discussed. Specifically, you told me that there was nothing we (the CoB) were currently doing that we should not be doing, and there was nothing we were not doing that we should be doing. You acknowledged your previous statement in our meeting on January 21, 2005.

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Doty's "evidence" that Grimes' statement is "factually incorrect" comes from his recollection of Grimes' instruction, in a late October of 2004 meeting, "to continue with all of the plans [Grimes and Doty] had discussed," presumably in *that* late October meeting. Doty also says that Grimes "approved [the] program" *again* in November of 2004, and a third time in January of 2005. Notice that, especially in the first two cases, Doty uses the future-oriented term "plans" in his argument that

Grimes was behind the K-12 EE delivery efforts at the three points in time before February of 2005. Another quote from the beginning of Doty's letter suggests that he (Doty) was playing fast and loose with his choice of words in refuting Grimes' accusation. That quote is presented below:

"Our initial efforts in late 2003 resulted in a funding proposal submitted to the Vice President of Research and Economic Development under the cover of the College of Education and Psychology . . . The next effort at establishing this program began when I initiated a meeting between myself, Pam Smith, and Ted Alexander. As a consequence of this meeting, Dr. Smith and Dr. Alexander met with Ms. Doty. Drs. Smith and Alexander concluded that Ms. Doty was the ideal person to deliver economic education programs and agreed with Ms. Doty to move forward. The College of Business, represented by Ms. Doty, initiated the program on Economic Education at Southern Miss when Ms. Doty participated in her first seminar on or about September 2, 2004."

As the quote above indicates, Doty held a meeting sometime before September of 2004 with Drs. Pam Smith and Ted Alexander, who both "concluded that [Susan] Doty was the ideal person to deliver the economic education programs," and, Doty writes, they agreed with Ms. Doty to move forward. So, Susan Doty, with the endorsement of Smith and Alexander, *authorized herself* to move forward with the EE initiative. As Doty writes, Susan Doty presented her first seminar on or about September 2, 2004. This seminar occurred almost two months before the first of the three Doty-Grimes meetings, wherein "plans" for K-12 EE delivery were discussed and "agreed" upon.

Thus, it appears that Grimes was factually *correct* in stating that he never authorized Doty to begin offering the K-12 EE delivery program before late October of 2004. Doty attempted to use the October '04 - January '05 meetings with Grimes, wherein they discussed "plans" for K-12 EE delivery, as a retroactive stamp on a process that had already begun full steam weeks earlier under the endorsement of Susan Doty, Pam Smith, and Ted Alexander.

Doty's quick feet worked to his advantage. Readers of usmpride should note that Pam Smith is the President of the MCEE, while Ted Alexander is its Chairman. Currently, Doty sits on the MCEE's Board of Directors. So, Doty effectively built a wall around Susan Doty's K-12 EE delivery enterprise that shielded her from any intervention by Grimes and Thames. This shield secured Doty's outside income stream from the project. Doty's use of language, and his effort to have this story hide behind the basic research issue raised by Grimes' so-called Black Friday memo by taking the spat into the public domain (via the

Hattiesburg American), seem to have been the result of intense planning.

So Harold Doty is apparently not dead set against economic education - it's just that he was trying to find a way to make a little money for himself (vis-à-vis his wife) without having to share the loot with Thames and Company.

This story illustrates Doty's insubordination and acrimony. What was the result of his childish and selfish behavior? Some would say that the CoB has suffered under the Thames Administration due to Doty's antics. Others would say that working under Doty's leadership is punishment enough. I think this is another instance of Doty using a public institution for personal gain and his childish reaction when his plans were threatened - had Grimes allowed CoST and ED to run a center for economic education, Susan Doty's boondoggle would have disappeared and with it a corner of Doty's vita building fiefdom.

Perhaps if Doty were not such a poor dean, this would be pardonable. As it is, it is just typical.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.hattiesburgamerican.com/assets/pdf/DB154929.PDF>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.hattiesburgamerican.com/assets/pdf/DB1550210.PDF>