

# **University of Southern Mississippi – A Tribal Moral Community**

## **PART 2**

In this new series, we will review the peculiar behavior of faculty at USM -- peculiar because their behavior is inconsistent with their extensive education and training. We shall show how science-trained colleagues totally ignored their long years of education and research in favor of irrational behavior. (See, Part 1 for background information of this series.) The irrationality reviewed in this series arises from strict allegiance to the USM's "Tribal Moral Community." Unlike the tribal morality of some USM faculty and administrators, we are concerned with evidence, reason, and understanding.

A framework to understand our colleagues' irrational behavior is "Tribal Morality" which was recently discussed in several widely published articles. For readers' convenience, we'll apply "Tribal Morality" from the perspective contained in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* report entitled, "De-Tribalizing Academe" by Peter Wood.

The faculty behavior reviewed will begin with Gordon C. Cannon and K. E. "Skip" Hughes II. Their behaviors, like other USM faculty to be considered, are selected because they were subject to sworn depositions or they themselves insisted on recording conversations. In other words, we report evidence based on their words.

### **Part 2: Gordon C. Cannon, Ombudsman, University of Southern Mississippi**

A question directed to Ombudsman Gordon C. Cannon, PhD, at his deposition on April 16, 2010 about his investigation of Professor DePree was, "If (someone) told you something, and it wasn't true, and you based your recommendation (in your ombudsman report) on that fact, would that change your recommendation?"

Cannon responded, "I don't think it would change anything."

**(You may email the editor at [marcdepree@gmail.com](mailto:marcdepree@gmail.com) for a copy of Dr. Cannon's deposition.)**

What would Gordon C. Cannon's chemistry colleagues think of his chemistry research if he discovered a claim wasn't true and his response was, "I don't think I would change anything." Cannon makes no qualification and expresses no interest in what effect the falsity has on conclusions. Cannon says, "I don't think I would change anything." He'd just keep on truckin' with false claims.

What would Gordon C. Cannon, PhD, have done if he were applying the principles of science, *i.e.*, a careful description and consideration of facts and evidence to the

accusations against Professor DePree? At a minimum he would have professed and demonstrated through behavior an unequivocal concern for the truth of others' and his representations. So, why didn't he? (See [Part 1](#) and future reports in this series.)

### **A Community of Tribal Morality**

Let's assume that Gordon C. Cannon understands that the principles of science, evidence, and reason advance knowledge in areas outside of Chemistry. It follows that there may be another process underway that helps us understand his irrational behavior.

Consider Gordon C. Cannon's behavior from the perspective of Tribal Morality.

Professor Marc DePree, DBA, had collected independent evidence of corruption by USM administrators and some USM faculty. The response from President Saunders was not to investigate the independent evidence of corruption by USM administrators and USM faculty, but was to assign Gordon C. Cannon, Ombudsman, to investigate Professor DePree. With the choice of applying scientific principles or following the principle of sacredness of USM, Cannon chose to apply the principle that USM is sacred and above investigation. USM, The Dome, President Saunders—especially through her expensive public relations campaign of aligning herself *as* the University of Southern Mississippi—“...had been raised to the status of sacred [symbols]” “[T]here was no room among the devotees, [like Gordon C. Cannon], to give thoughtful, rational consideration to...” the evidence available to him in support of DePree's allegations of corruption. And, since Cannon was devoted to the sacredness of USM, evidence showing the accusations of corruption against USM administrators were true, or the evidence that accusations against DePree were false, he, Cannon, could dismiss as “not changing anything.”

“When the sacred kicks in, [Gordon C. Cannon's] rational capacity gets detoured: ‘[He] use[s] [his] reasoning not to find the truth but to find ways to defend what [he] hold[s] as sacred.’”

The result? An irrational Gordon C. Cannon, Ph.D. False statements do not change anything. Applying this irrationality, Gordon C. Cannon's chemistry would still be happily working with the guidance of the Phlogiston Theory.