

*An Editorial*

## **Does Evil Lurk In Our Community? And Transfer to the University of South Alabama?**

by Marc DePree



*Alvin J. Williams*

A recent [breaking news report](#), “Another (Dangerous?) USM Professor Steps Forward,” published at [usmnews.net](#), reminded me of the [apparent ease](#) with which University of Southern Mississippi faculty are accused of being dangerous. Apparently, there’s an epidemic at USM of “dangerous people.”

All too often hidden in the background are the mobbers, the “colleagues” who lurk behind the scenes, looking for or making opportunities to bushwhack colleagues and destroy their lives and careers. The crime? Patty Munn made public in her deposition their mantra: they must go because they are not **“persons who view the world in the correct manner.”**

Hidden intolerance should be revealed. Why should those who are mobbed get all the attention and the horrendous publicity that inevitably accompanies accusations of “dangerous” behaviors? Those who mob deserve to be pulled from the darkness where they lurk and be seen in the bright light of sunshine for what they are.

And, Alvin Williams, like the others, has a special personal reason for joining the mobbing. He is desperate to belong and will do and say anything.

**Alvin J. Williams**

I did not personally know Interim Dean Alvin Williams, currently Professor at the University of South Alabama. I doubt we said a dozen words to each other in over twenty years in the College of Business at USM. Nevertheless, Williams in a letter to President Saunders insisted that I be fired for several reasons but, under oath, admitted he had no evidence to support them: “As I sit here today, I have no specifics.”

I did get to know Williams professionally when he insisted under oath that plagiarism (copying “without proper citation”) is ethically correct conduct as long as you get permission from the true author(s). “Copying without proper citation” is the phrase Charles Jordan used to rationalize his own behavior and the behavior Williams unreservedly approves. (Jordan used the phrase when he asked permission to copy another’s words “[without proper citation](#),” after he had been caught plagiarizing another school’s AACSB submission documents. That’s right. He asked for permission after he was caught.) And the permission, they insist, transformed plagiarism to proper conduct.

I recommend that readers review the [case studies](#) that provide documents in support of Williams’ and Jordan’s misconduct and warped view regarding plagiarism: “Is Accreditation a Reliable Authority on Academic Quality” and “University and AACSB Diversity.”

Williams crouched over a hundred comments with, “As I sit here today...” “As I sit here today” very quickly sounded like a nervous twitch of a liar. You can decide how truthful Williams is in his deposition.

The following is the actual sworn testimony of Alvin Williams, taken on June 4, 2008, in the case, *DePree v. University of Southern Mississippi* (Q. is my attorney's questions directed to Williams; A. is Williams’ responses.):

- Q. What I'm asking you about is statements that indicated animosity [against DePree that Williams wrote in a letter to President Saunders insisting DePree be fired].
- A. There were probably comments that I've heard around the building, again, about Dr. Depree's website. Again, I have heard those comments just in passing in general.
- Q. Can you tell me who?
- A. I don't have a specific name as I sit here today.
- Q. They [Munn, Jackson, Anderson, Pate, Clark, Jordan] didn't like [DePree's] website?
- A. My guess is to the extent that unfavorable things were said on the website if they had looked at it they probably would not have been -- would not have appreciated some of the comments...
- Q. So tell me this, why did you wait ... to do something about this [fear as expressed by Munn, Jackson, Clark, Pate, and Posey] ...?
- A. There were certain ongoing concern about their safety...

Q. And you were concerned?

A. Yes...

Q. Have you ever reviewed campus security's website?

A. I have been to their website. I have not reviewed it.

Q. Are you aware that there is a section on there about safety and threats and to physical integrity?

A. I am aware of that.

Q. Did you follow the directives on that website?

A. I did not.

Q. Do you think Dr. Depree is dangerous as we sit here [at this deposition] today, is Dr. Depree dangerous?

A. I'm not around Dr. Depree.

Q. I mean today sitting here giving your deposition?

A. As I sit here today, I am not.

Q. You weren't afraid when you took him that letter [letter ordering him from his office a few minutes before his first class of the semester was to begin.] on the 22nd of August, [2007] were you?

A. I had some concerns.

Q. You went down thereby yourself?

A. I did.

Q. You didn't call and ask for campus security to go down there with you?

A. I went in to Dr. Depree's office alone.

Q. By yourself?

A. I went to that office on my own.

Q. Nor did you ask any of your colleagues?

A. Did I not. I went alone.

Q. And you would agree with me though usually if you were fearful that there is safety in having somebody else with you?

A. Generally there are safety in numbers.

Q. How did Marc take this thing [letter ordering him from his office a few minutes before his first class of the semester was to begin.] when you delivered it to him?

A. He was pleasant.

Q. Did he do anything to cause you fear?

A. Not at all.

**So much for the fear claims. Williams was not concerned enough to even follow well-publicized security directives; Mary Anderson went out of her way to pick a fight with a “Virginia Tech danger” because she didn’t like the documents he placed on his office door; Patty Munn and Charles Jordan believed that bushwhacking a “dangerous person” is an excellent strategy to have a conversation with him. The truth revealed in depositions is that their decade lone efforts to get several USM presidents to fire me failed. They then hit on a winner: accuse DePree of being a “Virginia Tech danger.” Perfect accusation for a deliberately ignorant president like Martha Saunders. We’ll review her deposition next in this series.]**

Q. When did somebody first say termination of Depree to you?

A. When ... I got these letters [from Jackson, Anderson, Munn, Jordan, Pate, and Posey] I chose to prepare this letter to Dr. Saunders and these are my words in the form of termination. These are the words that I chose for this particular memo.

Q. Did you investigate [the accusations in the letters]?

A. I did not.

Q. Did you investigate [the accusations against DePree] back during the summer [of 2007] when they came to you with verbal things?

A. I did not.

Q. You would agree with me, would you not, that Dr. Depree's personnel file should reside in the college of business [in your office]?

A. That is correct.

Q. And it should contain in addition to his evaluations and his performance criteria, it should also include any disciplines that have been taken against Dr. Depree?

A. That is correct.

Q. Any complaints against Dr. Depree?

A. That is correct.

Q. Any grievances that Dr. Depree had filed?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you review any of those other components of his personnel file [before writing a letter to Saunders insisting on firing DePree]?

A. I did not.

**He couldn't trouble himself to get up from his desk and walk a few paces to get my personnel file. Maybe there's a good reason. There were no complaints against me in it. Instead, he would have found reports about why I was given early tenure and promotions, i.e., evidence of outstanding performance in teaching, research, and service; positive information. That would not reconcile with his unsupported claims to terminate me.**

Q. Is it your usual course of conduct to disregard directives contained in the rules and regulations of the university in which you are an interim dean?

A. It is not. **I follow university policy.**

Q. Usually?

A. In this instance ... no particular action was taken on the grievance [DePree filed citing misconduct of accounting faculty].

Q. So ... what you're telling me is that you decided to not follow the directives of the handbook; is that correct?

A. If I read this directive correctly, there were actions of course I should have taken and I don't remember taking actions on Dr. Depree's grievance at that time.

Q. Did you look at the handbook at that time to see what you were supposed to do?

A. At that time I did not.

- Q. So you didn't determine what your responsibilities were?
- A. I knew that there were actions required [with regard to DePree's grievances] at the dean's level and I don't remember the exact elements of the grievance. You see I do know one was filed.
- Q. And you knew that you were supposed to do something?
- A. I did not respond in a timely way.
- Q. You knew generally that you needed to do something as a dean, didn't you?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You did not know what you needed to do specifically?
- A. I knew that that information was detailed in in the faculty handbook.
- Q. But you didn't go look and see?
- A. At that moment I did not go to the handbook to review it.
- Q. Did you ever go look and see?
- A. I'm sure that I looked at the handbook, but I did not take any action at that time.
- Q. You specifically got the handbook out to see what you were supposed to do with regard to Dr. Depree's grievance over his 2006 evaluation?
- A. I did not get the handbook and read it specifically because of Dr. Depree's grievance.
- Q. But you didn't take any action?
- A. I did not take any action.
- Q. Tell me why you didn't?
- A. I don't have an answer as I sit here today.

**Williams doesn't have an answer he cares to reveal "as I sit here today." Why bother to consider my views and documentation in a grievance when he's already conspired with Saunders, Munn, Jackson, Pate, Jordan, Anderson and Posey to join the mob to fire me? So my concerns and evidence sat on his desk for months—in violation of University rules.**

**The reason Williams follows rules EXCEPT when they apply to me is revealed below in his deposition.**

Q. So you did not do what the handbook told you to do?

A. I don't remember responding according to the faculty handbook in the situation that you're describing. **[Keep in mind he had been an administrator at USM for almost 20 years and a faculty member for almost 30 years.]**

Q. Let me ask you a question, you talk [in your letter to President Saunders recommending firing DePree] about **perceived** recording devices. Do you know whether or not Dr. DePree actually records.

A. I don't know that.

**Unbelievable as it sounds, this was one of his major reasons why Saunders should fire me. Like his failure to determine the truth of his other reasons, he didn't try to find out whether I actually had a "recording device" or ever record conversations at USM. The fact is everyone testified that they didn't know. And, I never did record anything at USM.**

Q. Was Dr. DePree the only person whose actions affected the collegiality within the college of business?

A. The actions of Dr. DePree, in my opinion, had the most negative effect on collegiality in the college of business. However, when you have 75 to 100 faculty and staff members in a unit, there are certainly other instances of a lack of collegiality.

Q. What specific acts of Dr. DePree did you consider to lack collegiality?

A. We talked about the **perceived** recording device, **[We just disposed of that accusation, but he's still clinging to it as if it is a valid reason for firing me.]** I've also indicated the concerns about safety **[He also just admitted that he had so little concern about the accusations of fear and safety by Munn, Anderson, Posey, and Pate he didn't even follow campus security procedures, but he's still citing it, too, as though it remains a concern.]** and the things that resulted from those two actions.

Q. How did Dr. DePree's behavior affect research?

A. In any academic environment, it's important for colleagues and scholars to feel as though they can exchange ideas freely among themselves in both formal and informal settings. The **perceived** recording device kept individuals from having the informal exchanges that are so important in disseminating and chairing

research ideas.

Q. So everybody acted on a perception, is what you're telling me?

A. I'm saying that it had that effect.

Q. I understand but I'm trying to clearly understand this. Nobody knew that Dr. Depree had a recording device, everybody perceived that Dr. Depree had a recording device?

A. I don't remember anyone telling me that they actually saw it and had him admit that it was a recording device.

Q. Can you give me a single example of that happening where somebody did not communicate because they thought Marc had a recording device?

A. I cannot give you an example, sir.

Q. No specifics?

A. I cannot give you specifics.

Q. Did any students ever tell you that they did not feel safe to go about their usual business in Joseph Greene hall?

A. I have not had any input or contact with students regarding Dr. Depree...

Q. What you [in the letter to President Saunders to Fire DePree] said is that Dr. Depree has created an environment in which students do not feel safe to go about their usual business in Joseph green hall... what did you base that statement on?

A. ... No student came to me and said directly I don't feel safe because of Dr. Depree.

Q. And nobody has told you that a student has told them that they don't feel safe because of Dr. Depree?

A. I have not heard that that I can say yes to.

Q. So, really, you have nothing to base the inclusion of students in the sentence upon, do you?

A. I have no specifics.

- Q. You've been to the [DePree's] website, haven't you?
- A. I've never been.
- Q. Are you aware that Marc has printed other people's positions and views on things
- A. I'm not aware of that.
- Q. You didn't know that, did you?
- A. I'm not aware of that.
- Q. Didn't know it?
- A. Did not.
- Q. You're not aware that there is a prominent statement [on the front page of DePree's website] that if you bring us fact based information then we will print it on that website, are you aware of that?
- A. No.
- Q. The website of Dr. Depree also "adds to the fear and intimidation," doesn't it? [Quoting Williams from his letter to fire DePree]
- A. Yes.
- Q. Why are they afraid of the website?
- A. To the extent that things that appear on the website are untrue, are not based in fact or they are malicious I think people would be concerned about that.
- Q. What is the -- tell me the first untrue thing that is on the website?
- A. have not read the website, so I could not respond to that.
- Q.. What's the first thing on there that's malicious?
- A. I could not tell you that either.
- Q. What was the other word that you used, not based on fact?
- A. I used that phrase.
- Q. What on that website is not based on fact?

- A. I haven't -- I can't respond. I don't know.
- Q. You have no personal knowledge?
- A. No.
- Q. Nobody has told you that either?
- A. No.
- Q. So you are just saying something that you have no basis in fact for your claims about that website?
- A. I'm sure there are people that have viewed that website that have found information and material on there that is not true. I don't have the names of those people and I've never visited...
- Q. You say that some faculty members have left the college of business or that the departure has been facilitated by the vile unprofessional and damaging comments made about individuals on the website.
- A. That is in my statement [insisting President Saunders fire DePree].
- Q. That's in your letter.
- A. That's correct.
- Q. Tell me what you mean by that.
- A. The existence of the website and the things that were said about people that were counterproductive and negative, those things created I think an atmosphere of concern in the college.
- Q. Who have you discussed the website with?
- A. I have not read it as I indicated...
- Q. Whose professional reputations have been injured by the website?
- A. I don't have a particular name.
- Q. You haven't visited [the website, [www.usmnews.net](http://www.usmnews.net)]?
- A. I have not.

**In Williams' letter, he insists DePree be fired because he made false statements to AACSB. Here's Williams sworn testimony on that claim:**

- Q. And other than the things that you just mentioned [as reasons to fire DePree], would you also include the AACSB filings that Dr. Depree made?
- A. That is indicated in my memo to the president that he had contacted AACSB and shared comments that were not true and they were not based on fact.
- Q. Now, did you personally review Dr. Depree's grievances that he made to the AACSB concerning allegations of plagiarism and other events in connection with the AACSB's review of USM?
- A. I believe I remember getting this particular document. I don't remember conducting a formal review of the allegations. [As dean, and he testified earlier, he was required to review, investigate, and make a recommendation on the grievance.]
- Q. You have made the statement that Marc Depree's allegations to the AACSB were not based on fact?
- A. That is a statement that I made [to President Saunders to fire DePree].
- Q. Can you tell us how you made that determination?
- A. I don't remember...
- Q. But you made a statement that Marc's submission to the AACSB were not based on facts?
- A. I did make that statement.
- Q. What you're saying in your letter as I interpret it, is that Marc made allegations about COB's [College of Business'] programs and processes to the AACSB that were not based on facts. Okay?
- A. It was my understanding at the time that I wrote that letter that the University of Southern Mississippi had received approval [to copy "without proper citation"] of some sort from the institution in which several of those sentences were -- had in common. So that was the basis of those statements that I made on August 21<sup>st</sup> [that DePree should be fired for bringing to the attention of the AACSB that several documents submitted to the AACSB were plagiarized.]

**Jordan and Doty got permission to plagiarize after they got caught. This was after DePree**

**and several other likeminded faculty tried informal, internal efforts at USM to discuss the plagiarism but had failed. All the while, Jordan and Doty were busy getting permission to plagiarize others' words and ideas without attribution.**

Q. Are you aware to the extent to which the copying went ["without proper citation"]?

A. I have not explored that in any depth.

Q. And I believe if you will read the article where Dr. Depree says, he is showing the stuff that was copied in red so that the stuff that's in red was directly lifted from the previous document that belonged to Syracuse [University], the [academic] integrity policy?

A. And I don't know as I sit here today that we didn't get written permission in some manner to use these sentences from the Syracuse policy.

**In fact, it wasn't just "these sentences" but several pages of verbatim copying of Syracuse policy. The only words not copied were the attributions Syracuse provided at the end of its academic integrity policy giving credit for the sources of its academic integrity policy.**

Q. In fact, during the process for the AACSB, USM [copied "without proper citation] from two organizations [Central Missouri State University and Syracuse University]; is that correct?

A. As I sit here today, I'm familiar with only one.

Q. Which one are you familiar with?

A. As I sit here, I believe it's Central Missouri State University.

Q. And Central Missouri State University they [Charles Jordan and Harold Doty] did get permission...?

A. And that's the only thing with which I am familiar.

***A summary of Alvin Williams' deposition: As I sit here today, as a dean and one-time department chairman and 28 year veteran at USM's College of Business, I don't know anything about anything, except that DePree should be fired because I don't like what he says and it's proper to plagiarize as long as you get permission. And I have no reasons for that, either.***

**What did Williams really know? All documents that Williams says are not "fact" are [available for all to review](#). If calling documents written by the plagiarizers themselves, showing they plagiarized, are not facts, isn't bizarre enough, consider this: Williams is claiming that because Charles Jordan and Harold Doty got permission to copy "without**

**proper citation,” after they were caught, converts unethical behavior to ethical conduct. The misconduct is wiped clean by getting permission to plagiarize. Imagine your students presented the same argument after you caught them plagiarizing. Would that be an acceptable excuse for copying other’s words and ideas without attribution?**

**A final word -- a warning from someone who has been there: You need to exercise caution around Alvin Williams. If he doesn’t think you are collegial, if he and others don't like what you have to say, and if people like Patty Munn and he decide you are not a “person who views the world in the correct manner,” he may join a mob who will make vile, unfounded accusations in an effort to destroy your career.**