

What Happens when Administrators Sour?

On Tuesday, 7 November 2006, the EFIB met to discuss putting FIN 380 online for spring 2007 semester only. At the close of that meeting, wherein some other curriculum issues were discussed, EFIB Chairman George Carter e-mailed the following "meeting minutes" (which he kept) to the department's faculty:

Date: Tue, 7 Nov 2006 13:09:33 -0600
From: George Carter <George.Carter@usm.edu>
To: 'EFIB Department' <cob-ecfinintbus@usm.edu>
Cc: 'Farhang Niroomand' <Farhang.Niroomand@usm.edu>, 'Linda Jordan' <Linda.Jordan@usm.edu>, 'Harold Doty' <Harold.Doty@usm.edu>, 'Mike Vest' <m.vest@usm.edu>
Reply-to: EFIB Department <cob-ecfinintbus@usm.edu>
Subject: [Cob-ecfinintbus] EFIB Faculty Meeting

The Department of Economics, Finance and International Business met on Tuesday, November 07, 2006. Faculty members present were: George Carter, Trellis Green, William Gunther, Stephen Haggard, Matthew Hood, Mark Klinedinst, John Lambert, Tom Lindley, Akbar Marvasti, Frank Mixon, Daniel Monchuk, Farhang Niroomand, Edward Nissan, Sean Salter, and Charles Sawyer. Tom Lindley held proxies for John Clark and Ernest King. George Carter held proxies for Sami Dakhli and Jenny Shi.

Tom Lindley moved, and Stephen Haggard seconded, that Finance 380 be offered as an online course this spring semester only. Following discussion, the motion passed on voice vote.

William Gunther moved, seconded by Akbar Marvasti, that Economics 201 be name changed from Principles of Economics I to Principles of Macroeconomics and that Economics 202 be name changed from Principles of Economics II to Principles of Microeconomics. Following discussion, the motion passed on voice vote.

William Gunther identified issues with the three economics curricula (BSBA Economics, BA (Mathematics) Economics, and BA (Social Science) Economics) and led discussion of the identified issues.

The meeting adjourned thereafter.

Sources indicate to USMPRIDE.COM investigators that Carter's minutes fall significantly short of describing what really took place at the meeting. One source provided his personal notes from the meeting.

Our investigators used the personal notes provided by an EFIB faculty to produce an example of how Carter's meeting minutes could have appeared, assuming Carter is/was interested in providing an accurate accounting of what transpired in the meeting. The alternate minutes are provided below, with additions to Carter's words provided in blue typeface:

Date: Tue, 7 Nov 2006 13:09:33 -0600

From: George Carter <George.Carter@usm.edu>

To: 'EFIB Department' <cob-ecfinintbus@usm.edu>

Cc: 'Farhang Niroomand' <Farhang.Niroomand@usm.edu>, 'Linda Jordan' <Linda.Jordan@usm.edu>, 'Harold Doty' <Harold.Doty@usm.edu>, 'Mike Vest' <m.vest@usm.edu>

Reply-to: EFIB Department <cob-ecfinintbus@usm.edu>

Subject: [Cob-ecfinintbus] EFIB Faculty Meeting

The Department of Economics, Finance and International Business met on Tuesday, November 07, 2006. Faculty members present were: George Carter, Trellis Green, William Gunther, Stephen Haggard, Matthew Hood, Mark Klinedinst, John Lambert, Tom Lindley, Akbar Marvasti, Frank Mixon, Daniel Monchuk, Farhang Niroomand, Edward Nissan, Sean Salter, and Charles Sawyer. Tom Lindley held proxies for John Clark and Ernest King. George Carter held proxies for Sami Dakhliia and Jenny Shi.

Carter opened the meeting by announcing that he (Carter) had proxies for Shi and Dakhliia, and that Lindley held proxies for King and Clark. Carter announced that the primary, only, reason for the meeting was consideration of an online section of FIN 380 for USMGC for spring semester (2007) only. Carter stated that there were several other items that could be taken up if this main item moved through fast. Carter requested that a motion be made from the floor, and seconded, that FIN 380 be offered online at USMGC for spring 2007.

Tom Lindley moved that the faculty consider the proposal to provide FIN 380 online as stated in a letter (presumably from Lindley to Carter), which Lindley emphasized allowed for FIN 380 to be authorized online for Spring 2007 only. Stephen Haggard seconded, that Finance 380 be offered as an online course this spring semester only. Trellis Green asked if the course exams would be proctored. Carter indicated that the exams would be proctored. Following discussion, the motion passed on voice vote.

Carter told the EFIB that "we" are having great difficulty with the economics curriculum at this time because of a lack of students and getting courses offered. He indicated that he (Carter) had asked Bill Gunther to look into the problem with the 3 economics curricula.

Gunther announced that there are two main issues. The first is that Econ I and Econ II need to be renamed. He called for a motion to make the changes.

William Gunther moved (EFIB faculty says that Gunther did not offer the motion, as indicated here; Gunther called for the motion - see above), seconded by Akbar Marvasti, that Economics 201 be name changed from Principles of Economics I to Principles of Macroeconomics and that Economics 202 be name changed from Principles of Economics II to Principles of Microeconomics. Trellis Green asked if the change would also include reordering the course sequence, so that students would be required to take microeconomics before macroeconomics. Gunther said that one is not a prerequisite for the other, and that it didn't matter. Green indicated that he wanted to see the change. Lindley asked what they do at other places. Green indicated that usually

micro comes first. Lindley asked when the current sequence got started. Carter provided some of the history that led to the current sequencing. Following discussion, the motion passed on voice vote.

William Gunther identified issues with the three economics curricula (BSBA Economics, BA (Mathematics) Economics, and BA (Social Science) Economics) and led discussion of the identified issues. Gunther indicated that it was not a secret that economics has virtually no majors. He said that 13 majors, at all levels, had been identified. Gunther indicated that it was not unusual for schools to have low enrollments. He presented data from a WSJ article that showed that the number of economics majors rose 40% nationwide from the late 1990s to 2003 or so. Gunther said the CoB's lack of economics majors was creating a problem for Carter given that he can't offer a class in the curriculum because it wouldn't make. This leaves Carter in the position of making ad hoc substitutions. He said Carter needed solutions to this problem. Gunther stated that the department needed to have a discussion, but not necessarily take a vote.

Gunther questioned the listing of an "Economics of Africa" course. Gunther stated that the course had not been offered in 10 years. Mark Klinedinst said that the course was added only five or six years ago when the University was developing an African Studies program. Gunther said that one strategy would be to rationalize the course offerings and to delete courses that would never be offered. Gunther also suggested cross-listing courses with finance that would make sense to cross-list. Gunther indicated that doing so would help the finance enrollment and the economics enrollment. Gunther cited International Finance as one example, and Money and Capital Markets as another example.

Gunther suggested changing the title of ECO 305, Economic Issues, to make the course more attractive and more descriptive. Gunther stated that making these changes would affect the degree programs in economics, and he discussed some of the particulars. Gunther stated that the Economics with Mathematics BA degree might be the most problematic to deal with. He discussed some of the rearrangements that would be required with this particular degree program. Gunther reiterated that everything was up for discussion, not for votes.

Lindley stated that cross-listing with finance would not solve the problem in economics. Lindley pointed out that the main effect of cross-listing would be to allow Carter to assign economics faculty to teach various finance courses, thus reducing the number of finance faculty. Gunther said he didn't think this was the intention of cross-listing. Lindley said cross-listing would not increase the number of majors. Gunther agreed, and stated that cross-listing would be a short-run remedy for all of the ad hoc decisions that Carter has to make to get econ majors through the program. Lindley stated that in the past he might not have presented an argument, but that recent events had made him (Lindley) suspicious about the motives of CoB administrators. Lindley said that he saw the cross-listing as a way to reduce the number of finance faculty and increase the number of economics faculty by having economics faculty teaching the FIN courses. Gunther asked "who" would teach the FIN courses. Lindley

answered "the Chair." Gunther stated that it didn't occur to him that it would be a strategy to have econ people teaching FIN courses. Carter cut this exchange off by stating that we need to address other points so that the EFIB thinks about everything before making proposals.

Stephen Haggard asked if FIN 472 could be added to the ECO major without calling it ECO 472. Gunther and Carter indicated that even a geology or a math course could be added to the economics major without changing the prefix to ECO.

Lindley asked if the international business major is robust, and how many ECO courses the IB students take. Carter said they take the 2 principles, 2 intermediates, 336, 436, etc. Carter said the main thing was to get these issues on the table. Carter attempted to conclude the meeting at this point, but Trellis Green asked if ECO 401 was still taught. Carter stated that it was not taught. Green said it could be resurrected.

Daniel Monchuk then discussed ECO 305. Monchuk stated that he focused on fields of economics as an emphasis. He said that the students could easily be confused given the title of ECO 305.

Gunther mentioned that 493 would be dropped, and that 440 was the Capstone course. Gunther also said that ECO 101 should be taken out of the B.A. in economics curricula. Charles Sawyer suggested dropping the Economics with Math B.A. altogether. Sawyer also suggested that ECO 101 remain in the Economics B.A. curriculum in order to better attract liberal arts students.

Carter asked Klinedinst about the development of the Economics with Math B.A. Klinedinst stated that the original idea for that curriculum was to prepare students who are going to graduate school.

Farhang Niroomand suggested that since ECO 436 was required for both economics and IB majors it might make more sense to have 436 serve as the Capstone course instead of 440 (from an assessment perspective).

Klinedinst cautioned against Gunther's plan for removing courses from the USM Bulletin, given that it may be difficult to add them back at a later date. EFIB faculty generally agreed. Akbar Marvasti questioned why the faculty seemed interested in softening the economics degree to get more majors instead of adding a second degree track. Sawyer explained that the department had two tracks already, and that he (Sawyer) was suggesting softening the B.A. track only.

Green asked Klinedinst about the EFIB's relationship with the liberal arts representatives (for econ). Sawyer suggested that EFIB work with the people in the CoAL.

Monchuk asked about the time frame for changing the Bulletin descriptions. Carter explained the timeline for changing information in the USM Bulletin. Carter asked for other business. Niroomand stated that EFIB faculty should contact him about climate control

issues in their individual offices so that he could deal with the contractor about them.

Carter attempted to adjourn the meeting. He was interrupted by a question from Lindley about how online exams are proctored. Gunther explained that the Distance Learning Office requires that all of your exams be turned in to them prior to the semester. Gunther stated that this is not possible for him. Lindley said that you can observe test takers on IVN, but not with online. Green said that the issue came up at Academic Council. Green said that JUCOs are offering some nebulous online courses that are causing problems elsewhere. There is some belief in the Academic Council that some of USM's online courses are of low quality as well. Lindley asked how we can assure AACSB or SACS about the quality of our programs if we don't have control over our courses (through lack of proctoring of exams). Carter said that through Assurance of Learning we have to have control over our courses. Carter said we will. Carter said that Gunther has control over his courses now, and Shi will have control over her new online course in spring 2007. Carter said that as the EFIB looks at online courses in greater depth, as EFIB will have to do anyway, control is a primary issues that will be addressed in a satisfactory way. Carter said he didn't think there would be anyone who would want to offer courses that lack credibility. Lindley stated that some people would. Carter stated that he meant nobody among the EFIB faculty would. Sawyer stated that the switch from the old distance learning office to the new is responsible for a number of problems.

Carter reiterated that the EFIB is in charge of its courses, and that issue would be addressed by Shi and Gunther in the near term, and by the department in the longer term. Carter said some testing procedures are okay with him, such as requiring a midterm and final that the students have to drive on site to take in front of the professor. That would mean that students in Korea can't take the online courses.

Carter closed by saying that the EFIB needed more dialogue on these issues, and he planned to initiate an e-mail discussion using the department's listserv.

The meeting adjourned thereafter.

The meeting notes document just how little Carter divulged about the meeting within his meeting minutes (that were distributed by e-mail). This episode paints a picture about the CoB's administration that is anything but flattering.