

# Where's Skip Hughes Going?

## Part 3

### Do You Have Integrity, Director Hughes?

USM has posted a notice:

"The University of Southern Mississippi invites applicants for a full-time, 12-month, tenure-track faculty position as director of the School of Accountancy in the College of Business...Starting date is July 1, 2014..."

Skip Hughes has only been department chairman for less than five years. He came to Southern Miss hailed as someone who was going to turn the accounting program around. Skip was of the opinion the faculty was going to undertake some serious research rather than the low level, vanity publications that were substantially the norm. As we know, [nothing changed](#) and the research continues to be almost exclusively low level research. In fact, Hughes joined in publishing in low level journals .

Where's Skip Hughes going? Actually we don't know. There has been no public announcement of an impending departure. There is a [carefully buried announcement](#) on the Southern Miss web page for a "Director & Associate Professor." Only when you click on "view" do you find the details.

One reader suggested Hughes might have been the subject of a Patty Munn-like coup. Of course, Patty "retired" or was "pushed out" last June 2013 along with Charles Jordan and Roderick Posey. [As sources have told usmnews.net, the lack of fanfare surrounding their exodus smacks of a forced departure.] Anyway, let's get back to Skip. Perhaps we can gain some insight by looking at some earlier reports.

Director Hughes told me "things are going to change around here [University of Southern Mississippi School of Accountancy]." Well, Director Hughes, have things changed around here [University of Southern Mississippi School of Accountancy]?"

USM has been for years publishing documents that are the words and ideas taken from others "without proper citation." Here are the details of an ongoing failure of academic integrity (taken from an extensive study, "Ethics, Power, and Academic Corruption"):

#### **The Academic Integrity Policy**

...[Then-]Dean Harold Doty and Marketing Professor Laurie Babin seemed to use Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy as boilerplate. For example, USM's "College of Business" was substituted for the Whitman School's name, while the wording and

substance of the work were retained. As noted above, by comparison, *the Whitman School chose to give credit for the ideas and work of the creative sources of its Academic Integrity Policy*. This indicated that Syracuse University did not consider the Academic Integrity Policy was boilerplate. Rather, Syracuse's extensive list of sources indicated that proper citation was appropriate... Also, note that the only part of Syracuse's "Academic Integrity Policy" that USM administrators and faculty did not copy was Syracuse's extensive citation list of sources of its "Academic Integrity Policy."

### **Plagiarism is Still an Open Question at USM**

Colleagues did not set out to find questionable documents during our AACSB reaccreditation process, nor did they search for others after they discovered the first instance. The first questionable document seemed like a chance occurrence, a simple mistake easily corrected or explained. Colleagues were aware that the Accreditation Committee could have said, "Oops! We forgot to include a citation." Or, "It's customary for schools to copy from the accreditation documents of other, successful schools." USM administrators did not do either.

The second instance of copying "without proper citation" was found coincidentally in efforts to learn what other schools think about plagiarism. Its discovery, however, was more worrisome given the citations included in the original document but not USM's copied version. Nevertheless, USM's administrators, involved faculty, and AACSB might have made a case that an Academic Integrity Policy was boilerplate. They might have simply and publicly stated for the benefit of all AACSB institutions that accredited members were free to copy other Colleges' submissions to the AACSB and publish them without citation. However, they did not.

The principle researcher had early on recognized that the events unfolding were a proper subject for study regardless of the outcome. If USM and AACSB embraced transparency and an open discussion—as they so often claim, it would have been an inspiring case report about how they worked to improve the ethics and understanding of all AACSB members. More importantly, the report would have provided the dialogue and conclusions with regard to practical details of the parameters of plagiarism. Alternatively, if the administrators at USM and AACSB chose secrecy, refused to build an understanding of plagiarism to the benefit of all AACSB members, and failed to persuade USM administrators to follow its standards and advice, the study would be a cautionary report that the AACSB does not signal academic quality. The choice was USM's and AACSB's. They both chose dishonesty.

Note that the choices USM and AACSB administrators made and are chronicled in this case study continue to be relevant today. *The USM COB's copied "Academic Integrity Policy" remains posted on its website without the original school's lengthy list of citations.* (<http://www.usm.edu/business/academic-integrity-policy>. Last accessed April 13, 2014.) Anyone who reads the "Academic Integrity Policy" on USM's website is led to believe that it is USM's original work. Thus, in the absence of an investigation or open dialogue, the question whether "Guidelines" and "Academic Integrity Policy" constitute

plagiarism remains explicitly unanswered. This was a choice USM administrators and AACSB officials made.

It would also be quite simple to cite Syracuse University's "Academic Integrity Policy." Why not?

Furthermore, consistent with scientific norms, colleagues offered them [USM and AACSB administrators] an opportunity to comment on this research. USM administrators ignored the offer. The AACSB advised that, "We have no comments."

**Dear Director Skip Hughes, by ignoring the question and tacitly endorsing a copied Academic Integrity Policy(without proper attribution) you continue USM's unethical behavior.**