

## **The Curious Case of the Missing Economics Line Or, Anatomy of An Administrative Deal**

It starts, of all places, at USMGC. In May 2006, newly promoted Associate Professor of Economics David Sharpe resigns from USM to take an industry job. This is a crippling blow to the economics fiefdom carefully constructed over fifty years by the likes of Joseph Greene, Ty Black, George Carter, Charles Sawyer, and Farhang Niroomand. Having just lost Assistant Professors Sunny Wong and Melody Lo from the Hattiesburg faculty, Sharpe's departure leaves economics short 3 members overall. Lo and Wong's departures were expected, however, and Sawyer and Carter were able to make two hires – Akbar Marvasti and Sami Dakhliya – but were denied the opportunity to hire a replacement for Sharpe, even on a Visiting basis.

How can Niroomand, Carter, and Sawyer recover that lost line, when USMGC currently has Farooq Malik teaching economics courses only and Weihua Shi teaching half economics and half finance courses (giving USMGC a 9 course economics capacity for 2006-07)? The answer is as convoluted as any spy novel written, and it benefits from more than a little good fortune.

First, begin with Professor of Economics Frank Mixon's current grievance against Carter regarding the Spring 2007 schedule. In addition to the grossly unprofessional nature of Carter's assignment of Mixon to courses in Hattiesburg (removing him from ECO 202 – Principles of Microeconomics and assigning him to a smorgasbord of out-of-area-of-expertise courses), Carter assigned Mixon to teach a course at USMGC (oddly enough, ECO 202 – Principles of Microeconomics) for Spring 2007. The USMGC assignment seemed like just another form of punishment for Mixon, an outspoken critic of the Doty/Niroomand/Carter administrative trio. In context of other goings on, however, there has appeared another interpretation of this action.

In the past three weeks, former EFIB instructor Theresa Curley has been a regular in Joseph Greene Hall, with a stated purpose of gearing up to teach some economics courses for USM. Curley stated to a long-time CoB faculty member that she would be teaching ECO 202 – Principles of Microeconomics – in Spring 2007. The immediate question is Why would Carter remove Mixon from teaching ECO 202 in Hattiesburg and assign him to teach ECO 202 at USMGC if Carter just has to turn around and hire Curley to teach Mixon's course(s) in Hattiesburg? Again, this seems like a really expensive way to punish Mixon, which is what we thought until we heard the latest from EFIB.

There is a clandestine movement to put ECO 201 and 202 – Principles of Macroeconomics and Principles of Microeconomics – online. Keep in mind that the truly clandestine movement has yet to call for an EFIB faculty vote on the issue, a step that is required for passage to the CoB Undergraduate Programs Committee and the USM Academic Council. This step is strange. With the

School of Accounting reporting that their online efforts have been an utter failure, why put important courses like Principles of Macroeconomics/Microeconomics online? Hold that thought.

In a similar vein, Carter, Doty, and Niroomand have benefited from a pure stroke of luck. Weihua Shi, Visiting Assistant Professor of Finance (who also teaches economics at USMGC) is pregnant and will deliver her child in early Spring 2007. To accommodate Shi's pregnancy, Carter, Doty, and Niroomand have assigned Shi three courses that will meet only in the second mini term (March – May); this is not an unreasonable accommodation. What is curious, however, is the assignment of Shi to teach FIN 380 – Financial Analysis – at USMGC. FIN 380, according to SOAR, has not been taught at USMGC since sometime before Fall 2000. USMGC majors have been receiving acceptable substitutes for FIN 380 up to the present, yet now Doty minion Linda Jordan claims that FIN 380 must be taught at USMGC in Spring 2007. According to EFIB sources, Jordan claims that there is no acceptable time – not even on Saturday – to schedule FIN 380 for a face to face delivery during the second 8-week term; Jordan, Carter, Doty, and Shi's solution is to offer the course online. FIN 380 has not been approved for online delivery, and Carter is currently rushing the finance faculty to approve FIN 380 for online offering. With Shi, the only USMGC finance faculty member, having such an unusual semester in Spring 2007, why reintroduce a dormant course at this time? Doty has scarcely masked his dislike for the finance faculty since his arrival and has made many moves (most of which have been resisted) to attempt to force them to support his wishes.

Also, a phantom “hiring agreement” has recently appeared with respect to Farooq Malik that entitles him to a 6-hour load (instead of the normal 9-hour load) for Spring 2007. This hiring agreement was never revealed prior to Fall 2006 (Malik was hired in Spring 2005), and similar hiring agreements have not been offered to the other EFIB new hires. According to SOAR, Malik taught 6 hours in each of his first 2 semesters at USM (Fall 2005 and Spring 2006), so this isn't a “payback” situation for an overload last year.

A sideline is that there is apparently a monetary incentive program offered at USM for the Dean whose college adopts the most online courses by some established date. This additional “fun money” is rumored to be useable by the winning Dean for pretty much anything, including handouts to loyal supporters. Given Doty's pathetic yet ultracompetitive, acrimonious nature, one cannot see him turning down the opportunity to grab money away from other colleges. Doty can also ill afford to pass up the opportunity to get money that could buy more support for his deanship. But, what does this have to do with anything?

The activities that seem so unrelated can now be clearly linked.

Carter and Niroomand want another USMGC economics line to preserve their fiefdom. Doty wants more online courses to help him get more “fun money.” So,

they make a deal. To establish a need for another economics line at USMGC, there must appear to be a shortage of faculty at USMGC. Carter and Niroomand create the Malik “hiring agreement” to reduce the possible economics offerings at USMGC by one course; a side benefit is that Malik, who tendered his proxy to Niroomand for the “Black Tuesday” EFIB governance revote, gets a reward for loyalty. Now, some Hattiesburg economics faculty must be made to drive to USMGC to teach, and assigning Mixon to the task allows a Hattiesburg faculty member to drive to USMGC (creating the initial illusion need) and simultaneously punishes Mixon for dissent – two birds with one stone. Now, to cover the Hattiesburg course that should have been taught by Mixon, Carter hires Curley to teach ECO 202 online. Now, further need for another economics faculty line is demonstrated and Doty has an online course to boot. At USMGC, Shi’s pregnancy only clouds the issue a bit, so Niroomand, Doty, and Carter concoct the need for FIN 380 to be taught in Spring 2007, further reducing the possible number of economics offerings by one, plus Doty gets a second online course. Putting FIN 380 online would force the finance faculty to act against their better judgment and might set a precedent that would allow Doty leverage to try to strong-arm the finance group into offering even more courses online.

On balance, this convoluted series of actions lays the groundwork for a new economics hire at USMGC, provides Doty with two new online courses, punishes one of Doty/Niroomand/Carter’s biggest dissenters, and attempts to put a crack in the EFIB. This plan also allows supporters to be rewarded (Malik in an outright manner, an overload for Sawyer, and the promise of more “fun money” for Doty) and, most importantly, costs Doty, Niroomand, and Carter nothing. Or so they think.

The activity is questionable on the whole and despicable in specific parts. If you think the CoB administrators don’t think or act like this, just ask someone who knows about the Trellis Green lawsuit. They’ll tell you about the planning parties held at the homes of Stephen Bushardt, George Carter, and Ty Black in the early 1990’s at which the Good Old Boys would hatch intricate plans to rid the CoB of certain faculty and programs, to promote certain faculty and programs, and to maintain administrative control over the CoB in general. These are facts. It appears that the CoB administrative mobbing from the 1990’s has returned for an encore in 2006. Almost everyone in the CoB knows how things turned out for Black and Carter in the 1990’s; given that Carter’s behavior has gotten more egregious rather than less, do Doty, Carter, and Niroomand expect a different outcome?