

MAD MEN

A Look Back at the Marketing Empire that Almost Was

by Duane Cobb

All of the discussion around USMNEWS.net about "the greatest ever" scholars in each of the CoB's units raised some interesting conclusions. One of these is that the CoB's marketing unit peaked higher than any other unit in CoB history, thanks largely to the leadership of former College of Business Administration dean, Tyrone Black. During the mid-1980s and into the mid-to late-1990s, Black put together a marketing faculty group with such powerhouses that the new award-winning AMC television series *Mad Men*, a drama about a group of high-powered ad executives, is almost more reminiscent of the CoB's marketing faculty team of the late 1980s and early 1990s than it is of the 1960s big city ad agency.

This essay takes a look at just what we learned about the accomplishments of the marketing faculty assembled both under Black's leadership and of the group of faculty that was brought into the business school at USM shortly after Black's retirement from business school administration. That portfolio begins with Don Robin, arguably the top marketing faculty to have ever been with USM's business school, as well as the second best scholar to have ever called USM his or her professional home. The trail takes us to other noteworthy faculty, such as Eric Reidenbach, Barry Babin, David Hardesty and others. The group including Robin, Reidenbach, Babin, Laurie Babin, and Tony Henthorne all flourished under the Black administration. As a result of what was built by this cadre, others such as Hardesty, Tracy Suter and Daniel Goebel would be attracted to the b-school at USM. The breadth of the research portfolio of each of these former USM marketing faculty is shown below, along with their current institutional affiliations.

Don Robin

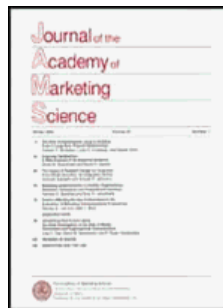
Wake Forest University



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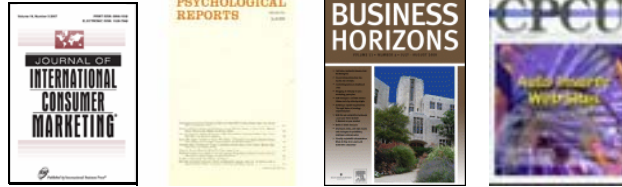
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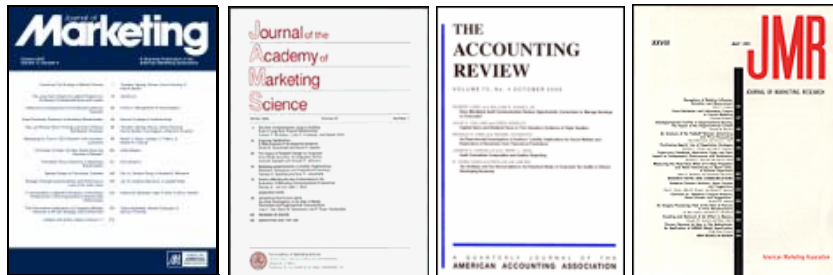
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Eric Reidenbach
Private Sector



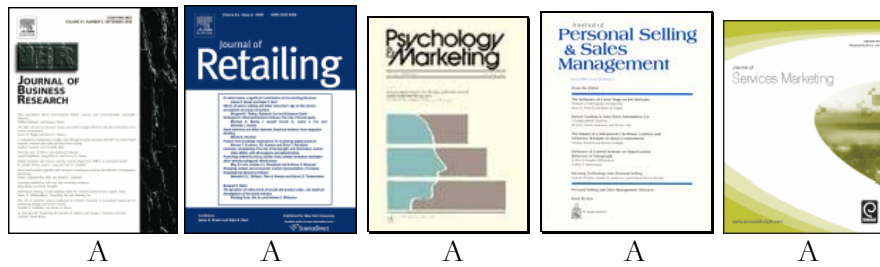
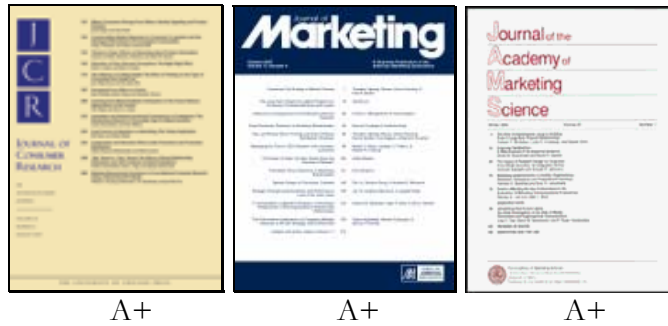
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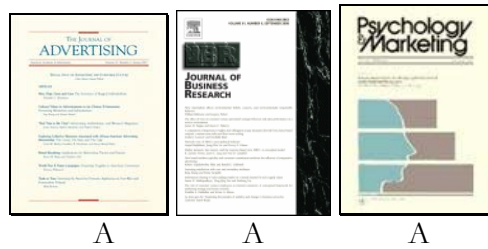
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Barry Babin
Louisiana Tech University



Laurie Babin
University of Louisiana - Monroe

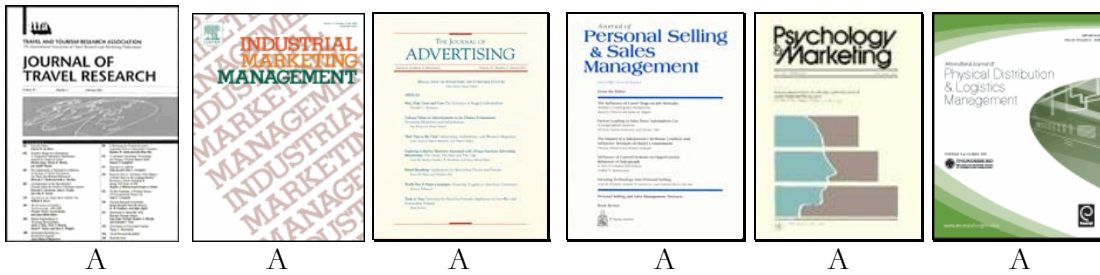




Tony Henthorne
University of Nevada - Las Vegas



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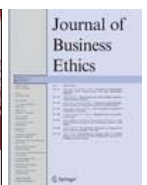
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David Hardesty
University of Kentucky



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Tracy Suter

Oklahoma State University



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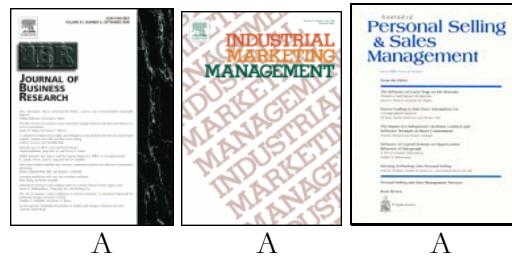
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Daniel Goebel

Illinois State University



The inserts above show just how impressive the marketing group at USM has been. It also shows that the USM marketing unit was poised to be a regionally recognized group, largely thanks to the foundation laid by Black. This potential was thwarted by the administration that followed Black's era, as marketing's second wave of top-shelf scholars (i.e., Hardesty, Suter and Goebel) would leave USM for other institutions across the country. Under the William Gunther administration, other areas were promoted at the expense of marketing, which would go on to make relatively few hires in the post-Black era. At the same time, units like ECO would go on to make numerous hires, a move that failed to lay a foundation for anything as big as what marketing was poised to deliver at its peak.

Interestingly, marketing also suffered relative to other units into the Doty administration. Again, ECO (and other units) did relatively well, at least on the human resources front, during this period also. This explodes some conventional wisdom in the CoB. That is that all of the deans who were trained in economics (i.e., Black and Gunther) favored ECO, and to the detriment of the other units. The one common denominator of the Gunther and Doty administrations was the presence of Farhang Niroomand in the associate dean's chair. Like Black and Gunther, Niroomand is also an economist by training, and it is an open secret that Niroomand wielded tremendous power in the CoB during the 1998-2007 period, a period that coincides with the fall of marketing.

At its peak, USM's group of marketing faculty was stellar. The USM business school could have built on the foundation that Black laid, and in a way that would have put the organization on the proverbial map. That it failed to do so comes as no surprise. In this episode, like so many others, USM's business school was its own worst enemy.