

Dr. Becker, Is it Okay to Scream and Swear at Staff?

Readers question whether violent and threatening conduct is tolerated at the College of Business. Many outsiders find it difficult to believe that such a hateful atmosphere could be created or tolerated. The conduct described in the following sworn testimony was ignored and quite literally promoted at USM.

“I was sitting in my office one day and my office door as I sat at my desk I could – if I turned sideways, I could see out into the anteroom of the suite where the secretary’s desk was. And the secretary – I saw her get up. I had a student in my office, by the way, so my door was open. I saw the secretary get up and walk, and I could see her get up and then she left my field of vision. And I could hear her say something like, ‘Dr. Becker [Dr. Cherylynn Fuller Becker, Associate Professor, former Chairman, Department of Tourism Mangement], I’ve got something for you.’

Well, Dr. Becker’s responsibilities were that she was the signature authority for her department. So anything that was financial or needed to be signed off on she was the person to do it, and this secretary who split time between my department and Becker’s department was the secretary responsible for that paperwork. So she was, I assume, carrying some paperwork to Dr. Becker to sign. And this was a usual and customary thing. ‘I’ve got something for you to sign, Dr. Becker.’

And the next thing I heard was that Dr. Becker was yelling, ‘Just get away from me. Just get the hell away from me.’ And my first thought was that someone was attacking Dr. Becker. It was that – so I had the student – I told the student, I said ‘Stay here.’ And I got up and I stuck my head out the door. And as I stick my head out the door, I look down to my right and I see Becker flailing her arms, yelling and screaming, saying ‘Just get away from me with that petty shit, that petty, petty’ – she was just yelling and screaming at this secretary.”

Dr. Saunders was present when this sworn testimony was given in Federal Court during Fall 2007. ***Dr. Saunders subsequently supported Dr. Becker’s application for tenure. Dr. Becker received tenure during the May 2011 IHL meeting.***