

Part 13

Questions directed to President Martha Saunders at her deposition on April 12 and 13, 2010--Q is question; A is President Saunders' answer.

Q. Could you meet with Dr. Depree any time you wanted to as his supervisor?

A. I'm not his supervisor.

Q. Dr. Saunders, I think when we started this you testified that you were in charge of personnel academics?

A. I have overarching responsibilities.

Q. But you could have talked to Dr. Depree?

A. I could have.

Q. You could talk to him anytime you want to?

A. I could.

Q. Have you?

A. No.

Other presidents at USM have taken the time to talk to Professor DePree. For example, when the accounting faculty secretly petitioned a previous USM president to fire Professor DePree, the then president asked to talk to him face-to-face. The event prompting the secret petition was the unforgivable act of questioning petty corruption in the School of Accountancy. Jim Crockett, then Director, School of Accountancy, had set himself up to get the Morgan Professorship. Professor DePree didn't know it when he nominated a junior faculty member for the professorship – a junior faculty who had already hit many of the best academic and professional journals. Professor DePree advocated rewarding a promising young academic to help advance the School of Accountancy. Furious, Dr. Crockett handed the nomination back to Dr. DePree [the rules required the nominations be submitted to the Director]. He said to Professor DePree, “Don't you understand, I'm supposed to get the Morgan Professorship next.”

Professor DePree challenged Dr. Crockett's conflict of interest-- collecting nominations, naming the members of the committee that selected the Morgan Professor, and excluding nominations except for his own. Needless to say, Dr. Crockett became the next Morgan Professor. It didn't matter that he had never published in any quality professional or academic journal or that he was scheduled for retirement shortly after his stint as Morgan Professor.

The previous president took a little time to talk to Professor DePree. What came of the complaint? That president understood and sympathized with Professor DePree. Dr. Saunders could not be bothered to learn what motivated the current petition to fire DePree or even whether there was any veracity to the claims. Dr. Saunders preferred ignorance. Even after she learned that the claims were false, she insisted on punishing Dr. DePree.

Power and ignorance – wait to see how it will affect your life.