

A CASE STUDY IN FAILURE

Farhang Niroomand

Farhang Niroomand is a Professor of Economics and Associate Dean of the College of Business at the University of Southern Mississippi. He is also the CoB's most frequent traveler, its most prolific grant writer, the academic affairs dean, and the keeper of the keys to the college's finances. Just what kind of job does Niroomand do, given all these responsibilities? Let's take a look at Niroomand's completion of his duties, grading along the way.

CoB faculty are evaluated on the following scale: teaching counts for 40%, research for 35%, and service for 25%. The standard teaching load in the CoB is 12 hours, but most faculty receive a 3 hour course release if they are "research active" meaning that they have published 3 articles in the past 5 years. Since 95% of CoB faculty are research active, the de facto teaching load is 9 hours per semester. Given that fact, each course represents 13.33% of each (9 hour loaded) faculty member's FACULTY DUTIES. Niroomand, who is considered to be research active, teaches only 1 course PER YEAR, since he teaches 0 hours in the fall semester and 3 hours in the spring semester. In essence, Niroomand receives release time for 83.33% of his TEACHING DUTIES and 33.33% of his FACULTY DUTIES (so far). Given that Niroomand only teaches 1 course per year, one would think that he could muster some quality in the classroom, but his classroom demeanor has been described as mean-spirited, his exams described as ridiculous, and his grading described as biased. Students use 1 word more than any other to describe Niroomand's classroom performance: "horrible." With so little responsibility and so poor performance, Niroomand's grade for Teaching is F.

If Teaching equates to 40% of a faculty member's FACULTY DUTIES, Research comprises 35% of the same. One document at usmpride.com shows that Niroomand ranked 29th of 57 CoB faculty in research over a period of 2000-spring 2006, having published only 1 B-level article and 1 C-level article in addition to 9 instances of "Other Scholarly Activity". Dolly Loyd, Marketing Instructor (whose evaluation process does not include a research component), equaled Niroomand's research output over the same period. Because Research is a lumpy and individual process, we cannot draw concrete conclusions regarding Niroomand's time spent on research. Based on his output, however, Niroomand can be judged average at best in the Research category. Clearly, he must be allocating a substantial portion of his research time to other activities. We assume that he devotes 1/3 (or 33.33%) of his research time to other activities, meaning that 33.33% of the 35%, or 11.67%, of the time that is supposed to be allocated to RESEARCH DUTIES is actually allocated elsewhere. For those keeping track at home, Niroomand receives release time for 45% of his overall FACULTY DUTIES (again, so far). Diminished responsibility accompanied by low-quality research equates to a grade of F in this category as well.

Service, the second most nebulous category, supposedly comprises 25% of a faculty member's FACULTY DUTIES. Between Niroomand's 1 committee assignment per year, he serves as editor of the Journal of Current Research in Global Business, a publication of questionable quality. Let's assume these duties consume all 25% of the FACULTY DUTIES as assigned, with no release time or reassignment of duty. While his service might seem great to the untrained eye, one committee assignment and an editorship at a low-end journal can only earn Niroomand a grade of C for service.

In total, then, Niroomand performs 55% of his FACULTY DUTIES as assigned by the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL). The other 45% is used to carry out his ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES as assigned by Harold Doty. Just what are these ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES? Let's take a look.

Niroomand serves as the Academic Affairs dean, meaning that he has purview over scheduling, course offerings, classroom assignments, and any other academic issues that may arise. However, Associate Professor of Accounting Gwen Pate currently serves as Director of Undergraduate Programs and Assistant Professor of Management Francis Daniel serves as Director of Graduate Programs, handling all academic issues, both undergraduate and graduate, so that Niroomand's slate stays relatively empty of academic issues. Not much of that 45% can be reasonably allocated to academic matters. Niroomand also serves as the budget director for the CoB, controlling the college's purse strings. However, the budgeting process is an annual process, so that the bulk of Niroomand's budgeting is done seasonally, or once per year. Throughout the year, let us assume that Niroomand spends 15% of his entire work week dealing with budgets and other financial affairs. This would indicate that, liberally speaking, his ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES use up approximately 36.36% of the missing 45%, or about 16.36% of his total duties, both administrative and faculty. With regard to administration, Niroomand has orchestrated the 8-week fiasco in Spring 2006 as well as the long hikes many students undergo as they have hustled from class to class and building to building in Fall 2006's sweltering heat. Financially, Niroomand has allowed and has participated in favoritism, boondoggles galore, and other questionable activities. Niroomand's administrative grade: F.

So, FACULTY DUTIES consume 55% of Niroomand's time, ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES consume 16.36% of Niroomand's time, and 28.64% of Niroomand's time is unaccounted for. Just how does Niroomand spend this 28.64%? We don't know, exactly. What we do know, however, is that Niroomand's job description calls for Teaching, Research, Service, and Administration. For these services, Niroomand is paid \$164,832.87 annually (salary plus fringes). That salary works out to be over \$650 PER DAY that Niroomand is required to work (assuming that he takes a 2 day weekend each week, that he receives 6 days of holiday leave, and that he receives 10 days of vacation per year). Let's assume a 5 day, 40 hour work week. Of the 40 work hours per week, only 28.54 of Niroomand's 40 hours are accounted for by his assigned duties, leaving 11.46 hours each week unaccounted for. That 11.46 hours represents roughly 1.43 work days per week that are unaccounted for. At Niroomand's daily rate (\$650/day), this

suggests that **Niroomand is absconding with \$929.50 of taxpayer money per week or approximately \$44,616 of taxpayer money per year!**

Of course, this 35% could just be the time that Niroomand famously spends playing politics in the CoB, intimidating female faculty and staff, and yelling at junior faculty. Some of that time could be spent orchestrating EFIB re-votes, handing out favors to loyal faculty (“Don’t forget what a big favor I did for you.”), plotting to fire productive faculty, or thinking of ways to punish dissent. On the other hand, some of this time may be spent cleaning up after Doty (think: a baby with a dirty diaper), since it is well known that Thames and Grimes do not trust Doty to order his own lunch these days. Either way, there’s an enormous amount of taxpayer money that is just being flushed down the drain because of Niroomand’s presence.

Niroomand’s grades: F, F, C, and F, average out to an overall F and a failing report card with regard to performance of his job description. However, we might give Niroomand an “F-minus” if we only knew what he was doing on the 1.75 days per week that he is M.I.A.

Maybe the recent usmpride.com report regarding Niroomand and the Department of Homeland Security may just be the beginning – Niroomand ought to fear a visit from Mississippi State Auditor Phil Bryant as well.