

Bender, Patty

From: Mike Cavagnero [mike@pa.uky.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, September 19, 2007 3:56 PM
Subject: Tom Troland
Martin Gaskell

Tom,

As with all emails on personnel decisions, please keep this message confidential. You may share the information with the committee in discussions, but please don't forward the email itself.

As you requested, I had a long, frank discussion with a UNL faculty member about Martin Gaskell; his reasons for leaving UNL; and the "sore points" he has had with

their physics department. It was illuminating.

According to this individual, Martin is

- 1) a gifted researcher who does his research on student facilities largely with undergraduate students, and who is very successful at receiving research funding for those endeavors;
- 2) competent and capable (but not especially gifted) at instrumentation;
- 3) an excellent and engaging teacher in introductory courses;
- 4) a very good public spokesperson for their observatory facility.

His principal argument with UNL faculty and administrators had to do with his desire to decrease his teaching load (which was large) to support his successful research efforts (by buying out of instruction.) This did not make his Dean or Chair happy, since he was hired on a 3-year contract to teach 5 courses per year, and finding replacement instructors was a big pain in the neck.

His other disagreement with the faculty was their plan to eliminate graduate research in astronomy from their department, thereby eroding his base of collaborators and colleagues. He never liked this decision ... and, according to the fellow I spoke with, he never accepts a decision that he doesn't like.

So both of these issues were unresolvable, because Martin simply refused to accept the decisions of his colleagues and administrators, and constantly found ways to bring them up again.

He also raised the questions of whether his personal religious beliefs affected his job performance ... and the answer was ... no. My contact, who had read all of his teaching evaluations, indicated that a small percentage of students would comment that "it was refreshing to meet a scientist who actually believed in God." But he indicated that he had never read a complaint about the manner in which Martin discussed religious issues in the classroom. Apparently, he had, on occasion, invited students who were interested in these issues to discuss them as a group outside of class.

Mike C

