

## Case Study Number Two

### **The Notorious Business Professor**

Steve is one of eight professors in the business school at a large, public university. His job responsibilities include teaching two classes per semester, developing a management research program, and advising and developing PhD candidates. He has been at the school for five years and has worked extremely hard to get tenure. Student ratings of his undergraduate classes are fairly solid; most students rated Steve as being an above average teacher in terms of their enjoyment, his level of knowledge, and his ability to stimulate critical thinking in class. Steve has already published several articles in some of the top management journals and has won several prestigious awards for outstanding research. Because of his research, Steve is on the fast track to becoming one of the top researchers in his field and already has a national reputation for his work. However, Steve has had a woeful track record with respect to developing and graduating PhD candidates. Steve has yet to be on a PhD dissertation committee or be an advisor to any PhD candidate in the program.

As the dean of the business school, you believe Steve's problems with attracting and graduating PhD candidates may stem from a number of factors. First, Steve does not believe the business school nor the PhD candidates are very good, despite the fact that the school has a national reputation for excellence. Steve graduated with honors from another nationally renowned business school, and often openly comments about how difficult his program was compared to your program. Steve also believes few of the PhD candidates are worthy of his attention, and although he had hired more than 12 of them over the past three years to work as research assistants in his management research program, none lasted more than two years. Virtually all of the research assistants believed Steve wanted too much of their time and effort and that he was insensitive to their plight as graduate students. Perhaps Steve's attitude towards his research assistants was best summed up when he fired his most senior research assistant for not being able to help with a series of laboratory studies being conducted over a particular weekend. You later found out the research assistant asked Steve to delay the laboratory studies so that he could attend his uncle's funeral. Steve said the experiments were crucial and could not be delayed any longer. The research assistant said nothing could deter him from attending his uncle's funeral, and Steve fired the assistant immediately after he returned from the funeral. Along these lines, when PhD candidates were giving seminar presentations to the other students and professors in the business school, Steve would take every opportunity to ask questions designed solely to make himself look brilliant and the presenter look incompetent and foolish. You have received numerous complaints from both the graduate students and several of the professors in your school about Steve's behavior.

Second, Steve's work schedule is designed to minimize his contact with others; he works from 2:00 PM until 6:00 AM every day of the week (including Saturdays and Sundays). Moreover, if for some reason students do want to see him, they have to schedule an appointment. Steve would usually schedule his meetings with students for 8:00 PM on Friday or Saturday nights. Because of his unusual work hours, one of Steve's biggest

claims to fame among graduate students was his role in preventing a computer theft from taking place at school at 3:00 AM on a Saturday morning, which just so happened to also be Christmas morning.

Third, Steve's difficulties in attracting and developing PhD candidates may be related to his age and his previous experience in dealing with others. Steve is a relatively young PhD - he went to graduate school immediately after college and some of the PhD candidates in the business school are older than he is. Steve also went through a very competitive graduate program in which individual, rather than cooperative and collaborative efforts were encouraged. Similarly, Steve has never had a "real" job, and his current position is the first ever giving him authority over others.

As the dean of the business school, you are well aware of the fact that Steve has managed to bring in over \$600,000 in corporate and government grants in support of his management research program, and this program has made a considerable contribution to the prestige of the business school and accounts for over 50 percent of the school's research budget. You are also aware that Steve's reputation among graduate students is becoming so notorious that it is beginning to affect the applicant pool for the graduate school. Many of the graduate students are beginning to tell applicants to go somewhere else for their degree if at all possible, and the six applicants accepted into the school last year opted to go to other programs. Although the department has never been particularly cohesive and you have never had close relationships with most of the other professors in the business school, you feel Steve's behavior has caused these relationships to be more strained than ever before.

A year from now you will make a decision concerning Steve's tenure. Three of the school's professors have been direct recipients of Steve's research (in terms of money and publications) and think he should be given tenure. The other four professors believe Steve's behavior is inexcusable, and granting Steve tenure will reward his condescending attitude towards students and will make his dismissal in the future virtually impossible. Steve has scheduled a meeting with you this afternoon, and wants to know what he can do to improve his chances for getting tenure. What will you tell him?