

All Faculty Announcement

February 22, 2012

Dear Colleagues,

I write concerning the scientific misconduct¹ charges leveled at Professor Edward Wegman. Charges were made from several sources, concerning an article Professor Wegman co-authored in *Computational Statistics and Data Analysis*, and concerning a report to a congressional committee entitled “Ad Hoc Committee Report on the ‘Hockey Stick’ Global Climate Reconstruction”.² As the University’s scientific misconduct policy Number 4007 stipulates, both charges were submitted (each separately) to a committee of inquiry, which found that the actions warranted an investigation. Each charge, again separately, was then submitted to a faculty investigatory committee. These committees, after careful consideration, have just returned their findings; these findings have been upheld by the President.

While University actions to this point have been confidential, as our policy properly stipulates, the case has received wide publicity from other sources, however inappropriately.³ The University has been publicly criticized for its failure to render judgment and even for not caring much about the charges. While our procedure is indeed prolonged, in part because of federal requirements and in part to assure due process, any implication of lack of concern is entirely misplaced.⁴

The committee investigating the congressional report has concluded that no scientific misconduct was involved. Extensive paraphrasing of another work did occur, in a background

¹ Annotations by John Mashey. See article by Dan Vergano 02/22/12:

<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/sciencefair/post/2012/02/george-mason-university-reprimands-edward-wegmand-1#.T0WXGfU8UsJ>

Ray Bradley’s complaints were for plagiarism, and the reader might spend 5 minutes looking at side-by-side comparisons done by Deep Climate. Cyan shows word-for word identical text, yellow shows trivial changes.

A: <http://deepclimate.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/wegman-bradley-tree-rings-v20.pdf>

<http://deepclimate.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/wegman-bradley-ice-cores-corals-v2.pdf>

B: <http://deepclimate.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/wegman-social-networks-v-2.pdf>

² WR: http://republicans.energycommerce.house.gov/108/home/07142006_Wegman_Report.pdf

³ See SIGMU: <http://www.desmogblog.com/gmu-still-paralyzed-wegman-and-rapp-still-paranoid>.

Feb 22 was Day 709 on that scale, on a process that should take little more than 382, by GMU’s rules. As documented there, GMU violated its own process repeatedly, but neither Ray Bradley nor anyone else publicized the fact that a complaint was under way. Wegman revealed the complaint himself on August 21, 2010, on Facebook. Roger Stough’s comments were inconsistent and promised dates kept getting missed. Not until late September did the fact of a complaint become public. SIGMU has the complaints and back-and-forth emails. The reader can assess the quality of response to a simple complaint.

⁴ In what way do Federal requirements or due process double the length of time over GMU’s standard written process, which is not particularly aggressive compared to others?

Other universities manage to handle simple plagiarism cases in less than 23 months.

section, but the work was repeatedly referenced⁵ and the committee found that the paraphrasing did not constitute misconduct. This was a unanimous finding.

Concerning the *Computational Statistics* article, the relevant committee did find that plagiarism occurred in contextual sections of the article, as a result of poor judgment for which Professor Wegman, as team leader, must bear responsibility.⁶ This also was a unanimous finding. As sanction, Professor Wegman has been asked to apologize to the journal involved, while retracting the article;⁷ and I am placing an official letter of reprimand in his file.⁸ Finally, because of the nature of the offense and its impact on the University, I am issuing this public statement. I believe that given the details in the committee report, these sanctions are appropriate to the nature and level of misconduct involved.

Sincerely,

Peter N. Stearns, Provost⁹

⁵ Tables 1 and 2 of the WR reference tables from Bradley(1999), albeit with errors injected. On WR p.14, amidst 2.5 pages of text, some copied directly from Bradley, the only hint is: “See Bradley (1999) for a discussion of the fitting and calibration process for dendritic-based temperature reconstruction.”

That is a very restrictive citation, and is actually wrong, as *dendritic* has a completely different meaning than the correct *dendrochronological*.

Bradley(1999)’s title is even misspelled as Quarternary.

Few readers would guess that most of those 2.5 pages had been copied from Bradley.

See SSWR: <http://deepclimate.org/2010/09/26/strange-scholarship-wegman-report/> pp.116-117, which points at the side-by-side comparisons done by Deep Climate mentioned earlier (A1+A2).

Further, SFWR: <http://www.desmogblog.com/wegman-report-not-just-plagiarism-misrepresentation> gives a detailed discussion of the way the Wegman Report distorted Bradley’s tree rings discussion, i.e., falsification atop plagiarism, especially easy to see when the plagiarism is already highlighted.

⁶Deep Climate had identified (B) the extensive striking similarities found in WR pp.17-22 to antecedents in Wikipedia, Wasserman, Faust and DeNooy, Mirvar, Batagelj], and then to the Computational Statistics and Data Analysis article.

<http://deepclimate.org/2010/04/22/wegman-and-saids-social-network-sources-more-dubious-scholarship/>

SSWR p.118 referenced that work and consolidated it in a 3-way comparison, pp. 119-128. The WR section was plagiarized, with edits and sometimes ludicrous errors injected. It lacked even a single citation. The CSDA article re-used about 1/3 of the same plagiarized text.

Bradley’s second complaint mentioned both WR and CSDA.

The CSDA section was ruled plagiarism, but it was a subset of the larger WR section.

How could the CSDA possibly be plagiarism, but not that section of the WR?

⁷ <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167947311002799>

Elsevier **already** forced a retraction long ago, over Wegman’s objections and Editor Stanley Azen’s resistance, so what does this actually mean?

<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/sciencefair/post/2011/05/retracted-climate-critics-study-panned-by-expert-/1#.T0a0-vU8UsI>

Stae: <http://www.desmogblog.com/mashey-report-reveals-wegman-manipulations> shows the process and Wegman’s unusual comments in trying to blame a grad student.

⁸ Exactly what impact does a reprimand in the file have on a person of Wegman’s age? Not being an academic, I’m not sure what that actually means.

⁹ This is just the commentary on this letter. There is more to the story. Discussion is ongoing by Deep Climate at his blog, <http://deepclimate.org/>, <http://deepclimate.org/2012/02/22/gmu-split-decision-on-wegman-plagiarism-in-csda-but-no-scientific-misconduct-in-congressional-report/>.