

Clemson Conflicts Questioned

By [fitsnews](#) • on March 15, 2010



By FITSNews || Two members of the Clemson University Board of Trustees – one of them a former statewide elected official – are employed by companies that receive annual contracts from the University worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, FITS has learned.

Even though the contracts were “competitively” bid, critics want the two trustees to step down from their posts – or have Clemson find other vendors for the contracts in question.

The two trustees involved in these questionable deals are former S.C. Lt. Gov Bob Peeler and John N. “Nicky” McCarter. Peeler is a [glorified lobbyist](#) with Waste Management Inc., which has contracts with the University valued in excess of \$100,000 annually. McCarter is CEO of Defender Services, which is said to have contracts with the school valued in excess of \$600,000 annually.

Peeler is obviously well-known in South Carolina political circles. He served two terms as South Carolina’s Lieutenant Governor before being defeated in the 2002 GOP gubernatorial primary by Mark Sanford. His brother, Harvey Peeler, is the Republican “Majority” Leader in the State Senate an an ardent supporter of Clemson.

McCarter himself is well-known for the way he basically [bought his way](#) onto the Clemson board two years ago, doling out thousands of dollars in campaign contributions to S.C. lawmakers who turned around and voted to support his candidacy. McCarter and two other trustees are running for reelection in 2010.

Peeler is not up for reelection until 2012.

In an odd perversion of taxpayer-funded governance, a majority of the thirteen-person Clemson board is comprised of “self-perpetuating life members,” in accordance with the will of Thomas G. Clemson.

In a recent report on trustee conflicts, Harvard professor Richard P. Chait said that having schools give out contracts to trustees was “exceedingly ill-advised.”

“It doesn’t set the right ethical tones,” Chait told the [*Chronicle of Higher Education*](#).

We agree.

In fact, it could very easily be construed that the reason these two trustees have tolerated glaring examples of Clemson’s [administrative excess](#) and [mission creep](#) over the years is simple: the University has been padding their pockets.

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