

31st & Pearl

A Spoonful of Budget Cuts Helps ECO Go Down

There are ". . . no sacred cows" when it comes to cutting USM's budget, or at least that's what USM provost Robert Lyman told the USM Faculty Senate in late Jan-09. One of those cows, according to Lyman, is academic programs, and as far as academic programs go, the CoB's economics major is one of the more bloated the institution has ever known. About a dozen faculty for the dozen or so economics majors -- it doesn't get any fatter than that. And it's not just the inflated faculty ranks in ECO, it's also the salaries there. George Carter, William Gunther, Farhang Niroomand and Edward Nissan, four of ECO's five full profs, are on the tab for \$131,000, \$124,000, \$126,000 and \$109,000, respectively. That's \$490,000 per year across just four faculty members, three of whom are on 2/2 teaching loads. That's enough to make the economists up at Ole Miss jealous, and Lyman told USM senators that Ole Miss has "deep pockets."

Surely the USM central administration can muster the fortitude to save the taxpayers a bundle by cutting the economics major. It will certainly have CoB dean Lance Nail's support. Nail tried to ship the CoB's economists over the CoAL, and would have if not for a little faculty governance on the other corner of 31st & Pearl. Where are the savings? Everywhere. There are a few untenured ECO faculty that can be *unassigned*. The unit is also scheduled to soon become part of BEDS (business economics and decision sciences), divorced from its sister-major IB (international business), which is being merged into management, where it should have always been. Once the merger takes effect, if not before, the CoB's curriculum people should begin the task of stripping the IB curriculum of those 300-level and above ECO courses that have propped up the bloated ECO unit for so many years. They should also rewrite the CoB core to allow for substituting out of ECO 336, the ubiquitous international economics course that benefited a few CoBers over the years.

The harsh winds of economic turmoil have placed the CoB/USM administration at another crossroads. Now is the time to serve as proper stewards of the taxpayers' hard-earned contributions to the state's coffers. The task is at hand. This is a no fail mission.

31st & Pearl is a series housed at usmnews.net that features commentary on aspects of life in the CoB from a variety of columnists.