

31st & Pearl

CoB Stimulus Package

Something CoB dean Lance Nail perhaps failed to properly account for when ousting the CoB's economics faculty is the combination of their low cost and wide applicability. Under previous b-school deans, the economists were covering undergraduate and graduate economics courses, undergraduate and graduate statistics courses, and undergraduate international business courses. In fact, this was also happening during the early (2008-10) portion of Nail's current reign. To top this all off, the CoB could, and still can, acquire economists for only 70-something thousand dollars apiece.

These are important considerations in the current budget climate because Nail has embarked upon a program of spending at least somewhere in the neighborhood of \$300,000 just to bring in Skip Hughes (ACC) and Leisa Flynn (MKT), and he is possibly proposing another \$150,000 to bring in Michael Dugan (ACC). Sure, these are all seasoned, senior-level professors, who cost more. But, without ECO the CoB is now in the position of having to spend at least \$100,000 in salary alone to hire *anybody* to do *anything*. This includes hiring someone who is even ABD (i.e., not terminally qualified), which it may have to do as things improve over the coming years. Seen in these terms, a group of two or three CoB hires will begin to resemble the CoB's (USM's) own fiscal stimulus package.

To be fair, it is understandable why Nail did what he did back in Aug-09 in ousting ECO. The ECO faculty, led by former EFIB chairman George Carter, were unmanageable. Over the years the senior ECOers had secured bloated salaries. Mark Klinedinst (professor) hadn't published an indexed journal article since 1998. Akbar Marvasti (professor) was presenting decade-old research at Friday seminars. Edward Nissan (professor) and Carter (professor) were continuing what many view as their co-authorship charade. Carter had also transformed into something akin to a clinical professor in order to boost his overload pay. Course scheduling in stats had become a game to benefit Carter and Nissan. Sami Dakhliya (associate professor) was more concerned about teaching in Europe than he was about teaching in Hattiesburg (on top of that, Dakhliya's research seemed to have been shut down since 2006). Finally, Daniel Monchuk (assistant professor) was using thousands of dollars in CoB funds to have research articles published.

The unmanageability was compounded by the problem Nail was reportedly having with the ECOers vis-à-vis external constituencies. With the collection of Carter, Dakhliya,

William Gunther, Klinedinst, and Monchuk, the CoB had arguably the most liberal (left-leaning) group of university economists between New England and the west coast. Word was spreading between July-08 and fall of 2009 that Business Advisory Council-types were feeling some discomfort about the group. When the announcement came that ECO would move to the CoAL, the running joke at the time was that the group was even too left-leaning for USM's liberal arts crowd. Now that's saying something.

Still, not having a cheap source of labor to tap is going to provide Nail with some tough decisions in the years to come. CoBers are now watching those types of decisions play out with the acquisition of Hughes, and possibly Dugan. If the stories about hiring a new MPA director are true, and that directorship is not set for Dugan, then another \$200,000 will be needed from the CoB's shrinking coffers. The day that the CoB breaks two records – one for fewest faculty, and the other for biggest payroll, might be just around the corner. When that occurs, the salary envy that already exists at USM, and is aimed right at Greene Hall, will only worsen. By then, USM provost Robert Lyman's displeasure with the CoB may win out over USM president Martha Saunders' affection for it.

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