

31st & Pearl

Dark Shadows

It's no secret that Jack and Jill Hattiesburg have a low opinion of USM faculty. To counter this, many USM faculty have suggested that Jack and Jill shadow a USM professor for a day or more. To this we say: Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it. It's not much of a stretch to suggest that such a shadowing program might give Jack and Jill an even worse perception of USM than they had before. Consider two faculty from EFIB – one on either side.

Suppose the Hattiesburgs followed economics professor William Gunther around for two or three days. One would want to organize this show carefully, or risk the possibility of Jack and Jill discovering that Gunther spends portions of his week in Josephine Alabama! It would also work better for the Hattiesburgs to be kept from the fact that Gunther is the Director of the CoB's Bureau of Business and Economics Research. To learn the truth would give them the information to form the opinion that Gunther is not doing a substantial portion – at least one-third – of his job for USM, a job that MS taxpayers will likely pay him around \$125,000 per 9-month year for doing (starting Aug-07). The final act of the show will be for Jack and Jill to see Gunther slap some Powerpoint slides up for the masses (in either JGH 115 or JGH 116). All-in-all, things won't go so well for the CoB, at least from a public relations perspective.

Next up would be associate professor of finance, John Clark. Again, the Hattiesburgs would see a Center Director (Financial Services) who treats the position more like a manageable annoyance than anything else. They might also see how little (some) college professors teach. In Clark's case that is a 2-day load, with the two days combined into one (for more efficiency, of course). All of this assumes Jack and Jill will be able to find Clark. According to his students, many of whom read usmnews.net, Clark is rarely around JGH, even before class on teaching days (or day). For all of this, expect Clark's salary – at least the public portion of it – to exceed \$110,000 per 9-month year starting Aug-07. That's two directors, and two potentially disastrous job shadow choices, who will likely earn \$235,000 per year combined, by Sept-07.

Job shadow options in other areas aren't much better. In MIS, the Hattiesburgs might get to spend a day with Kuo Lane Chen. In marketing it could be Elizabeth LaFleur. In accounting we might have Roderick Posey, more than 100 publications strong, or Jim Henderson, golf clubs in hand, spending the day (or days) with Jack and Jill. None of these choices would improve the current public relations position faced by USM faculty within the Pine Belt.

Whose fault is it? How about we start with an administrative structure in the CoB that rewards sycophancy more than scholarly work? We can work down from there, although we should keep in mind that the sycophancy part will probably account for more than 75% of the situation.

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