

31st & Pearl

Don't Cry for Bill, USM CoBers

With his impending USM retirement after this, the 2009-10, academic year, Bill Gunther's long academic career may have come to an end. That career will have spanned 25-30 years at the University of Alabama, the institution from which he is currently drawing a large portion of his old salary. It will have also spanned about 12 years at the University of Southern Mississippi, five of which were spent as CBA dean.

For much of the past 37-42 years in academe, Gunther has drawn over \$100,000 in primary pay, and that doesn't include the supplemental teaching he did for the UofAL while dean of business at USM – an egregious act in and of itself. It also doesn't include the teaching he did for the University of West Florida, while also employed “full-time” by other institutions like those mentioned above.

Yes, Bill Gunther is more than maxed out in AL's state retirement system, and about at half-full in MS' PERS. On top of that there's the supplemental retirement accounts he has likely built up (e.g., Valic, TIAA-CREF) through UofAL, USM, UWF and all the rest, as well as full benefits through the United States Social Security System. Because of all of this, he'll be fine as he relaxes in his \$500,000+ estate down in Josephine, AL, where he has maintained permanent residence for a number of years now.

The truth of the matter is that Gunther has long been a drain on the CoB's resources. As part of the overstuffed (for so long) ECO unit, Gunther has used resources that could have gone to strengthening the CoB's healthcare marketing or accounting areas. Instead, his lifestyle has been propped up by former EFIB administrators like George Carter, who provided Gunther with course releases and cushy teaching schedules so that he could continue to move back and forth between Hattiesburg and Alabama's Gold Coast with relative ease.

The former CoB dean who wears a bracelet, something that in part formed a persona that a former USM marketing prof often said likely doomed Gunther's efforts to win the hearts and minds of potential USM b-school financial backers, will soon fade away from the scene at USM. When that day in spring 2010 finally arrives, maybe Gunther's old boss, former USM president Shelby Thames, will arrive at JAG on a Shetland pony and offer Bill a ride out of town.

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