

# 31<sup>st</sup> & Pearl

## Gloomy Economic Forecast has Silver Lining

For her 28 September 2007 article in *The Hattiesburg American* entitled "Economist: State to see slow growth for next 15 months," Shelia Byrd interviewed Mississippi's State Economist Phil Pepper, who says that Mississippi can expect slow growth over the next 15 months, through December of 2008. According to Byrd, "[Pepper's] forecast, along with millions of dollars in agency deficits, likely will force lawmakers to recommend a conservative spending plan for next fiscal year." A less-than-enthusiastic economic forecast is not good news. However, a conservative spending plan for next fiscal year is not a bad thing, and not necessarily from one ideological perspective or another.

In this case, a conservative spending plan will not likely include raises for Mississippi's university faculty, as the previous two State budgets have. Each of these included 5 percent raises for higher education, and as [usmnews.net](http://usmnews.net) has shown, much of the portion of these that were allocated to USM's College of Business was squandered by college administrators in one way or another. Whether it was the incessant "Hallabing" of faculty, the particularly sad salary increases that former Associate Dean Farhang Niroomand lavished upon himself, the almost-\$18,000 worth of political payoffs handed out to economists Sami Dakhliya and Akbar Marvasti, or the completely untoward 2007 merit pay raise given to Steven Jackson, a faculty member at Loyola University during the relevant evaluation period, it was, in the words of EFIB Chair George Carter, "always somebody doing something."

Yes, merit raises in the CoB epitomize "good money after bad." There's never a doubt. If conservative spending plans mean no raises in the CoB, then taxpayers will be well served by a movement to right. In fact, it probably couldn't come at a better time. There's a P&T jailbreak train conducted by an Interim Dean that is leaving the tracks in a few weeks. Enough "good money after bad" will be changing hands at the end of that journey. Let's not add insult to the already injured taxpayers.