

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

## On Borrowed Chatter

In case you hadn't noticed already, USMNEWS.net's *GH Chatter* series has been on overdrive lately, all in an effort to stay on top of the stories circulating about the CoB's economists. Of course, the oldest news is that a plan hatched by the senior members of the group has 5 retirements (Klinedinst, Carter, Green, Gunther, Nissan) being effected in order to save 4 others (Marvasti, Gevrek, Dakhliya, Monchuk). Recent *GH Chatter* says that some of the seniors, Klinedinst and Carter in particular, may end up with "phased retirement" that is both heavy on the teaching and long on the "phased." Even more recent *GH Chatter* has it that Martha Saunders' administration may now be in jeopardy due to increasing evidence of inept management.

How does all of this fit together? I will borrow what would have been future entries in the *GH Chatter* series to editorialize on this matter. First, a long on the "phased" "phased retirement" for either/both Carter or/and Klinedinst will be bad for Saunders. They will work tirelessly to see to it that she "pays a price" for her actions regarding the elimination of economics. As the former (1987) interim Mississippi IHL commissioner, Carter's tentacles extend into the political halls in Jackson. Remember that the most recent person to hold that title is none other than former USM president Aubrey Lucas, a close, personal friend of Carter. And, as a resident of Hattiesburg's tony Canebrake neighborhood, Carter's tentacles extend into the far reaches of Hattiesburg society.

It is no secret that Klinedinst's reach extends well into the College of Arts & Letters at USM, where so many of the power brokers lie. He is also a very important player in the Faculty Senate world, and in the AAUP universe. Klinedinst is making inroads these days that will, according to sources, likely come to haunt Saunders. The frenzy that the CoAL was worked into, reportedly at the hands of MK, over the cutting of ECO attests to the belief that Klinedinst can be a thorn when he wants.

Who else comes into play here? Well, recent *GH Chatter* has it that economist Sami Dakhliya has a reach that extends across the USM student body. Reports are that he may actually be partnered in various private sector commercial ventures with USM students. As such, Dakhliya's reach perhaps extends to student organizations. Of course, this would all be in addition to the role he plays as "guru" to the economics students, a group Dakhliya credits with bringing down the USM administration's plan to chop the economics programs and faculty.

By using terms such as “subterfuge,” these economists are already of the mindset that Martha Saunders and Robert Lyman are their enemies. By crediting the ECO students with dismantling the plan to eliminate the economics majors and the 9 tenured/tenure-track economists, these economists are already thinking about matters strategically and confrontationally. Any long on the “phased” retirement situation will only work to further galvanize an already well-functioning political machine. The next 6 to 18 months at USM promise to be fun to watch.

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