

31st & Pearl

One Heckuva Plan

It has been about one year since the Martha Saunders administration agreed to a plan put forth by the USM b-school economics faculty that would allow the unit, which had recently been eliminated by the Saunders administration, to survive as a smaller group over in USM's liberal arts college. That fall 2009 plan essentially forced the retirements of the five mostly senior economics faculty so that the four mostly junior economics faculty could continue offering an economics major in USM's CoAL. The five mostly senior economists include Mark Klinedinst, Trellis Green, Edward Nissan, William Gunther, and George Carter. Those in the smaller group include Akbar Marvasti, Deniz Gevrek, Daniel Monchuk, and Sami Dakhliya.

Speaking at a faculty senate meeting shortly after approval of the plan, USM provost Robert Lyman characterized the retirements of the five senior economists as "selfless." One has to give Lyman credit on that one, because all five of the retiring economists would have continued on at USM if sufficient budgets were around for them to do so. However, the same act that Lyman described as selfless began to unravel over Christmas break of 2009-10, when Gevrek announced that she was immediately departing USM for Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi. Of course, in order to make a Christmas break 2009 departure happen, Gevrek must have been interviewing and visiting the TAMUCC campus while the ink on the USM plan was still drying. Thus, Gevrek was maneuvering in a way that would hang the five senior economics faculty out to dry, all while the plan was being finalized.

Not long after Gevrek headed west, Dakhliya told others that he would be leaving USM after 2009-10 for a university job in France. Shortly after news of Dakhliya's departure spread around campus, he even told a member of the local media that he was looking forward to his new life in Paris. At this point, the five retiring USM economists were blowing in the wind. Then, around June of 2010, Marvasti informed various USM officials that he would be leaving USM before the start of the 2010-11 academic year. Marvasti's departure came at about the same time that he was scheduled to move his professional belongings from Greene Hall to

the Liberal Arts Building. Marvasti's exit was like spreading salt over the wounds of his senior colleagues.

In the end only Mochuk remained as the "USM economics department," and contemporaneous reports (summer 2010) indicated that he was stewing over his predicament (sole USM economist, no new job). He ultimately made the same decision his three former colleagues had made by departing USM before the start of fall semester 2010. In a surprising twist, however, Monchuk reportedly left without securing employment elsewhere. This was indeed the final straw in an ill-fated plan to save "economics" at USM.

To reiterate, Lyman was on point in characterizing the senior economists' act as selfless. It's too bad no one has heretofore characterized what the four junior economists did – to reiterate once again – in hanging their senior colleagues out to dry. Surely both Dakhliya and Gevrek either knew, or had some idea, during the fall of 2009 that they would not be returning to USM for 2010-11. Why didn't they call a meeting of the junior economists and develop a plan that would have *the four of them leave* after 2009-10, thus saving their five mostly senior colleagues? This question is a crucial one given what we now know about the way events unfolded for USM economics after fall 2009. It's time some answers to this question are provided.

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