

31st & Pearl

Reputation Snatchers

The recent *Special Report* on Akbar Marvasti's decision to recycle an 8 year old study for presentation on "EFIB Fridays" goes a long way, as so many other recent EFIB activities have, toward bringing the EFIB back down to earth. For years various CoBers have touted, to excess, the so-called accomplishments of the EFIB. Given recent reports about tales of Edward Nissan ushering in academic research in the college to stories about Charles Sawyer's abilities to read recommendation letters for *unstated* content,, the other CoB units are now in position to snatch their own (relative) reputations back.

Let's be clear, the other units in the CoB have, to borrow a phrase from new USM President Martha Saunders, "lotsa problems." For one, as Talai Osmonbekov goes, so goes marketing. TO's vita is soaring by leaps and bounds. If CoB administrators can pull Marvasti and Sami Dakhliya, two ballyhooed yet *underachieving* members of the EFIB, away from the merit raise trough, maybe the CoB will have some chance of retaining Osmonbekov. As it stands, TO is leaving money on the table by remaining in Hattiesburg, and his departure is all that stands between the CoB's marketing unit and the academic abyss.

One could go on and on with other examples of the troubles facing various CoB units. What's important now is that the entire USM community is learning, a little bit at a time, just how overblown stories about the quality of the EFIB has been for two or more decades. Now, even though the other units are rising only because the EFIB is diminished, and rightly so, areas like management, fashion merchandising and perhaps others have a chance to face a level playing field, and possibly grow because of it. Don't expect EFIB faculty like George Carter and Farhang Niroomand to sit back and allow the transition to occur unchallenged. They will scratch and claw to maintain the status quo. Their efforts may make for some nasty in-fights, perhaps requiring the use of "Pardon our Progress" signs in Greene Hall. Still, now is the time to level the playing field, and for the CoB to progress as a unified entity, not as the Balkanized mess it has been for the past 10 years.

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