

Editorial

**A Trophy?
Why?**

A December 11, 2013, [Hattiesburg American](#) public relations release for USM said,

University of Southern Mississippi President Rodney Bennett proudly displayed the school's Halbrook Award trophy during this morning's media roundtable. The award, announced during the Mississippi Association of Colleges and Universities Annual Conference in November, recognizes Southern Miss for graduating the highest percentage of male athletes among state public universities (72 percent from 2008-13).

"We hold this trophy with great pride for what we're doing with academics in athletics," he said.

Where are the questions that a responsible news outlet should have asked? Since THA didn't bother, let us ask them here. (Don't expect answers, but the silence may tell us all we really need to know.) Why "award" a trophy for a graduation rate? And is President Bennett bragging about a 72% graduation rate he didn't have anything to do with? Is 72% a rate to be proud of?

Before you begin clapping over a trophy for graduating "student athletes," you might want to ask what did these graduates study at USM? What they are doing now? And maybe most important, can they read and write?

The real measure of success is what USM's graduates are doing now. So, where are they and what are they doing, Mr. Bennett?

Given USM's tendency to distort information, details might reveal whether the award is form and no substance.