

An Embarrassment?

A recent *Southern Miss Now* news release seems embarrassing. Does USM have no shame?

Here's an excerpt and citation so that you can read the [entire report](#):

After the catastrophe surrounding The University of Southern Mississippi School of Music's production of "Sweeney Todd," Dr. Mike Lopinto mailed a letter to the play's author, Stephen Sondheim, describing the story of the cast's misfortune while working on the musical.

Lopinto had heard that Sondheim often answered fan mail, so he decided to write the Tony Award winner about all the cast had endured in trying to stage the performance. Not only did Sondheim reply he donated \$500 to the School of Music.

Let me be clear. Mr. Sondheim's gift is not embarrassing. A gift to the University, in any amount, is appreciated. However, let us put the gift in context. If you or I had sent a check for \$500 with a letter wishing all well, would it appear prominently on University webpage? Would a University press release, complete with a copy of the letter, be published in the *Hattiesburg American*? I think we all know the answer to that question.

The embarrassment is the University's overwrought eagerness to be associated with a well known person.