

Answering the Call

HOW THE FOUR STRUGGLING COB UNITS RESPONDED TO NAIL'S CHARGE

When CoB dean Lance Nail assumed the reins of USM's b-school on 1-July-08, he identified four problem units with respect to majors/enrollments – economics, fashion merchandising, management information systems and tourism management. And as he [recently told](#) *The Student Printz's* Meryl Dakin, he gave each unit the charge of increasing their numbers or becoming uncompetitive. As Nail explained, three of the four units answered the call. Only economics failed to respond in a productive fashion to Nail's call. A summary of the story, as told by Nail, of each of these four units is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Answering the Call

Troubled CoB Unit	Response to Nail's Call to Action
Economics	----
Fashion Merchandising	# majors/enrollment nearly doubled
Management Information Systems	developed strategic plan to increase enrollment
Tourism Management	# majors/enrollment nearly doubled

As Nail explained to Dakin, and as summarized in Table 1, both FM and TM answered Nail's call by nearly doubling their respective #majors/enrollments. And though enrollments in MIS have remained constant, the MIS faculty produced a comprehensive, strategic plan for increasing the #majors/enrollment. Only economics failed to respond positively to Nail's charge.

CoB professor of economics George Carter, who was the EFIB chair at the time Nail arrived in the CoB (1-July-08), and who remained chair through 30-June-09, told Dakin quite another story about this episode in CoB history. Carter stated that economics did take concrete steps to increase enrollment. These steps, according to Carter, include (1) holding student economics seminars each Wednesday, (2) recruiting of students in the CoB's principles of macroeconomics (ECO 201) and principles of microeconomics (ECO 202) courses, (3) consideration of joint programs with philosophy and history, and (4) discussion of building the B.A. in economics.

Sources tell USMNEWS.net that there are a number of problems with Carter's responses. First, what Carter says economics did represents more of a "bits and pieces" approach to solve ECO's problems, not a coordinated strategy. Second, and as pointed out by USMNEWS.net columnist Duane Cobb in his editorial [Fewer Programs = Better Programs](#), having "joint programs with *philosophy* and *history*, and building up the B.A. in economics" represent "efforts to grow economics majors . . . in the CoAL," not the CoB. Whether or not Cobb realized it, Carter's comments to Dakin in this area open him (Carter) up for additional criticism. That is that "consideration" of joint programs and "discussion" of building up the B.A., both explanations Carter gave Dakin, aren't real actions, they are precursors to real actions. They now represent further *inaction* (on the part of Carter, Klinedinst and the other economics faculty) of the sort that *Nail* explained to Dakin. Finally, sources say that the student seminars of which Carter speaks are the (relatively new) economics club meetings that USMNEWS.net has reported on occasionally. They also say that these meetings sometimes degenerated into the kind of spectacle that likely brought disrepute on the CoB's economics unit, not positive public relations.