

## **USM Athletics Continues to Drain USM's Coiffers**

HATTIESBURG – After the 65 teams for the 2010 NCAA men's basketball championship were announced on 14-Mar-2010, the 32 teams participating in the 2010 NIT were revealed. Next, the 16 participants in the new CBI were made public. Finally, the 16 invitees for the CollegeInsider.com post season tournament (CIT) were named, and Larry Eustachy's USM Eagles were among this group. While some USM athletics supporters are happy with this news, many in the USM family recognize this situation as a potentially major financial drain on the institution during one of the most trying financial periods in the institution's history.

Reports are that the entry fee for the CBI is somewhere in the \$40,000-\$50,000 range per team. Though unknown, some say the CIT has a significant entry fee component as well. Such fees, combined with the lack of prestige associated with the new CBI and CIT (i.e., these two tournaments appear to be "vanity events," unlike the prestigious NCAA and NIT), leads many to decline invitations to the two events. For example, Alabama declined overtures from both of these tournaments this year, citing the substantial fees associated with the events. USM, on the other hand, appears desperate to give Eustachy his first post-season invitation in six years at the helm of the men's basketball program. During that period, USM has won about as many games as it has lost. Even this year's 20-13 season includes 4 wins against William Carey University and teams in WCU's division.

On Thursday (18-Mar-2010) Eustachy's cagers will travel to Louisiana Tech for round one competition. This trip will add to the costs associated with CIT entry. Future road trips, perhaps even much longer ones against other relatively unheralded competition, may await the Eagles should they win on Thursday. Will Amy Young and/or other USM faculty senators raise questions about this situation in the near future? That remains to be seen. What is apparent, however, is that USM seems desperate to hold on to Eustachy, despite the fact that many USM athletics supporters want the controversial coach to be fired.