

## USM's Giannini Big Part of National Controversy

HATTIESBURG – As the Associated Press [reported](#) on 29-Mar-2011, college football's Fiesta Bowl is in serious jeopardy when it comes to its current inclusion among the sport's BCS Bowl rotation. This precarious position for the Fiesta Bowl comes with the ousting of the FB's President and CEO, John Junker, who was removed after an internal report uncovered that "excessive compensation, nonbusiness and inappropriate expenditures and inappropriate gifts" were prominent during his management of the bowl. Among the misdeeds are (1) the finding that the FB spent \$33,000 for a birthday party for Junker, (2) the discovery of a strip club-related bill totaling \$1,200, and (3) the revelation that Junker was provided a \$27,000 annual car allowance, among other ill-advised activities.

On 30-Mar-2011, award-winning **YAHOO!SPORTS** reporter Dan Wetzel, who uncovered the details now hounding Ohio State's head football coach Jim Tressel, got in on the growing controversy with his story entitled "BCS conducts shallow probe as party rages on," which chronicles USM athletics director Richard Giannini's involvement in the situation.



By Dan Wetzel, **YAHOO!SPORTS**

Wetzel's story begins with, "[t]he Bowl Championship Series is so troubled by the graft exposed in Tuesday's Fiesta Bowl corruption report that it appointed a special 'task force' [to 'evaluate the bowl's findings and its recommendations']. Among the members is an athletics director who accepted a free Caribbean cruise from the Orange Bowl just last summer. Yes, there's nothing like having a guy – in this case, Southern Mississippi's Richard Giannini – who takes lavish gifts from one bowl game to judge another bowl game for giving out lavish gifts." With this opening statement, Wetzel – one of the more well-known sports writers in the United States – throws down the gauntlet on USM's Giannini, and, by association, USM president Martha Saunders.

Wetzel goes on to write, "Giannini, the task-force member, was one of more than 40 administrators (plus spouses, of course) who accepted the Orange Bowl's 'complimentary getaway' to the Caribbean in June. He was pretty much just following the crowd. (He has not responded to attempts seeking comment). According to records obtained by PlayoffPAC, there wasn't a single business meeting scheduled for the entire trip. The brochure did note that attendees would have time for things like a day on the private island of CocoCay, which 'offers activities for everyone, from parasailing to sipping delicious "Coco Locos" on a hammock.' PlayoffPAC has filed an IRS complaint

against the Orange Bowl, claiming that the trip – among other expenditures – violated various not-for-profit rules.” Clearly, Giannini, pictured below, has put himself and his institution, USM, in a precarious position.



This scandal, and Giannini’s part in it, is anything but good for USM, now or at any other time. However, *now* is a particularly bad time, given USM’s budget difficulties, which have led Saunders to deliver almost 50 terminal letters to tenured/tenure-track faculty since Aug-09. Hearing now that Giannini hit the beach at CoCoCay, a private island, from the decks of Royal Caribbean's Majesty of the Seas cruise ship, is a slap in the face to the USM community, and in particular its faculty and students, who have been lectured by Giannini about the harm caused by any cuts to the institution’s athletics coffers.