

Did Philosophy & Religion Get Hosed?

HATTIESBURG - An anonymous reader recently sent a copy of the University Priorities Committee report to USMNEWS.net offices. From the information contained in the document, it appears that the UPC ranked academic programs at USM on an "efficiency" or "productivity" basis. What is astounding is that USM's philosophy and religion programs - both of which were hammered in recent weeks by the USM administration - were ranked higher than many USM programs that ultimately dodged any program cuts, program consolidation, or faculty terminations.

The philosophy program (B.A.) was rated by the UPC at about the same level as the CoB's casino, tourism, and hospitality program (B.S.). It also came out well ahead of USM's master's programs in international development, executive nursing, and polymer science engineering, as well as its PhD programs in coastal sciences, criminal justice, and geography, among others. The religion program (B.A.) defeated some of these programs as well, coming in slightly ahead of the M.S. in computer science on the UPC scale.

Overall, the USM philosophy and religion programs are 50th and 40th percentile programs (approximately) on the UPC scale, which sources say should not have put them in jeopardy of being eliminated as a result of the FY 2012 budget cuts, at least not according to the UPC standard. Of course, being part of a traditional liberal arts education argues against cutting them on almost any basis, sources say.

Anonymous sources continue to tell USMNEWS.net that the UPC report referenced here was "largely ignored" by the Saunders administration in determining which programs to cut/consolidate, and which faculty to terminate. Their position seems to be supported by the secrecy surrounding the details of that report, and by the analysis above concerning philosophy and religion. As stated above, staffers at USMNEWS.net were provided a copy via an anonymous communiqué. Only time will tell if additional copies emerge in the days ahead. In the meantime, expect USMNEWS.net to continue reporting on these issues.