

Economics Programs Eliminated, ECO Faculty Cut Loose

HATTIESBURG – Recent speculation by USMNEWS.net sources that the CoB's economics programs and faculty were in jeopardy from the plans to shave \$2 million from the CoB's budget has come to fruition. The USM administration has now released detailed reports enumerating dozens of line-item budget cuts, and the CoB's economics programs and faculty are found amongst these. According to USM president Martha Saunders and USM provost Robert Lyman, [eliminating these](#) programs and faculty will save the CoB \$924,532, a figure slightly less than the \$1 million estimate provided to USMNEWS.net by sources. Within this line-item cut is the elimination of 5 filled tenured faculty lines and 4 filled tenure-track lines. The cut also includes economics professor William Gunther's Bureau of Business and Economics Research, which housed Susan Doty's Center for Economics Education.

According to IHL Board rules, the CoB's economists will serve out the 2009-10 academic year, during which they will presumably search for employment elsewhere for the 2010-11 academic year. However, a number of these faculty qualify for retirement now, including George Carter, Edward Nissan and Trellis Green. Professor Mark Klinedinst is possibly among this group, though he may need to buy a year or so of PERS credit to effect a full-benefits retirement after 2009-10. Faculty like Akbar Marvasti, Sami Dakhli, and Daniel Monchuk, on the other hand, are too far from the PERS retirement window, assuming they made the PERS choice at the time of their employment, so they will soon likely begin their job searches. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that none of the CoB's current crop of economists has the kind of academic record that will make a 2009-10 job search relatively stress-free. Instead, those in this group typically have "gappy" research and "spotty" teaching records, likely rendering their job search efforts problematic at best.

In other areas, the CoB will eliminate its financial planning program, which was begun for then-assistant professor John Clark back in 2003. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that Clark did little, if anything, with that program since then, and he has just recently returned to his prior affiliation, the University of Missouri – Kansas City. Speculation has arisen that Clark knew back in the spring of 2009 that this cut was coming. Saunders and Lyman estimate that this financial planning program elimination, which is accompanied by elimination of Clark's faculty line, will save the CoB \$175,000.

The elimination of the ECO major and its faculty allows the CoB to dissolve the month-old department of business economics and decision sciences. The DS faculty will be consolidated with other departments in the CoB. This move eliminates an unfilled tenure-track position, a filled staff position, and a filled administrative salary supplement. The savings generated from this line come to \$210,000. Combined with the other two entries, the CoB saves \$1,309,532 with these three cuts alone. Sources, tell USMNEWS.net that the CoB will likely have to absorb more faculty losses, as there is still about \$690,000 between where the CoB stands now and that \$2 million mark set earlier by Saunders and Lyman.

Sources also say that it appears now that the great rush by then-interim CoB dean Alvin Williams in 2007-08 to fill open lines in MGT and MKT probably saved positions in these two main CoB areas, yet that rush also likely caused the elimination of the nine filled lines in ECO. Of course, a number of other factors were at work as well, such as the small number of majors in the three economics programs. According to information released by Saunders and Lyman, the three economics programs generated only 5 graduates (combined) each year. These ECO programs could also count only 21 majors at the time of the cut. To have gone from an economics-dominated CBA and CBA administration 30 years ago to a CoB without an economics program today is, according to sources, a case study in calamity and failure. Of course, the one constant throughout this period is former EFIB chairman George Carter, whose 1979-2009 tenure spans the entire rise and fall history of ECO at USM.