

Giannini Hired as Consultant by UNO's Fos

HATTIESBURG - A number of media outlets, [including](#) *The Hattiesburg American*, [are reporting](#) that [recently-retired](#) USM athletics director Richard Giannini has been hired by the University of New Orleans as a consultant. Giannini's over-arching task is to assist UNO in retaining its Division I status in [intercollegiate athletics](#), something that has been in jeopardy in recent years. Secondly, Giannini will assist in UNO's search for a new permanent athletics director. *THA* describes Giannini as a 45-year veteran of intercollegiate athletics who will serve as UNO's liaison to the NCAA, ". . . to ensure that UNO is fulfilling its Division I membership requirements as well as assist in preparing and delivering presentations for potential conference membership."

UNO's previous athletics director, Amy Champion, [supported a reduction](#) in UNO's emphasis on athletics by way of moving the institution down to either Division II or Division III. Champion was dismissed as athletics director by UNO's new president, Peter Fos. Fos replaced former UNO president Tim Ryan, who was fired. Readers who are well versed in American higher education likely have a working understanding of the trials and tribulations of UNO, dating at least as far back as 2005, when New Orleans was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. This background, particularly UNO's Dec-2011 [decision to hire](#) Peter Fos as its new president, make this particular story intriguing. As long-time readers of USMNEWS.net are aware, Fos served as dean of USM's College of Health [during the tumultuous](#) Shelby Thames administration (2002-07). He later left USM for the University of Texas-Tyler, where he served as provost. As UT-T provost, Fos [used his authority](#) to promote the hiring of former CoB dean Harold Doty as the b-school dean at UT-T. [It was not long after](#) Fos' [hiring of](#) Doty [that](#) UT-T became [embroiled](#) in [scandals](#), leading to the mysterious departures of Fos and Gregg Lassen, a UT-T vice president who had also previously served under Thames at USM. Fos departed UT-T in April-2011 for a [post in the](#) LSU Health Sciences Center, one he held *for only seven months* before taking the presidency at UNO.

Giannini [became embattled](#) in his final days as USM's athletics director for his part in the institution's decision to play Nevada in the Hawaii Bowl instead of facing Penn State in a Texas-based bowl. This controversy came on the heels of revelations of Giannini's [involvement in a national scandal](#) in major college football that involved bowl-related perks and other benefits - a situation Yahoo Sports reporter Dan Wetzel referred to as "graft." As [reported a year ago](#) by USMNEWS.net, Giannini's response to critics of his receipt of lavish bowl-related gifts was rather weak. This was followed by

a USMNEWS.net [columnist's call](#), via a *31st & Pearl* column, for Giannini's ouster. Given this background, sources tell USMNEWS.net that it is not surprising that Fos hired Giannini, stating at the time, "I have known Richard for many years. He is an extraordinarily competent leader and administrator. I am appreciative that he has agreed to help UNO during this important period, and I have no doubts that the university will benefit enormously from his guidance."