

## **Dr. Bennett, IHL's "Preferred Candidate"**

We have all watched the various blogs, news reports and commentary about Dr. Rodney Bennett's status as the IHL's "preferred candidate" to become president of The University of Southern Mississippi. The question is Dr. Rodney Bennett qualified to be president of the University of Southern Mississippi?

If we agree on nothing else, it is clear that Dr. Bennett's credentials, qualifications, call it what you want, are weak. Inadequate. Insufficient. Even, to quote one commentator, substandard. It's also clear that he's qualified by education and experience to be USM's Vice President of Student Affairs, not its president.

Here's the real question: why would the members of the IHL open themselves to such an obvious, demonstrable criticism? Why would the IHL risk its own credibility as well as further damage to a university which has already suffered through three presidents who have been forced out?

IHL Commissioner Hank Bounds is reported by several news organizations as saying that "The fact of the matter is he was the very most qualified person for the job."

Let's think about that: "The fact of the matter is he [Bennett] was the very most qualified person for the job."

Assume Dr. Bounds is telling us the truth. Dr. Bennett is the "very most qualified person for the job;" that Dr. Bennett is the best applicant in the pool of applicants the IHL had to choose from.

If this is really true, and it's hard to tell because Mr. Bounds, *et al.* are so used to spouting PR nonsense and operating in secrecy, USM is in need of real change, not just a superficial facial. Change begins with honesty and openness which seems to be anathema to Southern Miss and the IHL. A slow, but continued, institutional decline should be expected. That's how corruption and its negative impact happens: slowly.

A [recent report](#) outlined the harmful consequences of IHL's secrecy selecting university presidents. Don't lose sight of the fact that the IHL is a governmental organization born and bred in secrecy.