

Breaking News

Marketing Faculty Ranks Devastated, Yet Set to Expand Programs

LONG BEACH – USM’s College of Business is rapidly becoming the surreal. The recent departure announcements of marketing faculty Tony Henthorne, to UNLV, and Talai Osmonbekov, to Northern Arizona University, have devastated the CoB’s marketing faculty ranks in both scholarly value (reach) and teaching services. The combined journal publications list from Henthorne and Osmonbekov is both long and peppered with quality outlets, from the *Journal of Advertising* to the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, with others in between. With these departures, the only non-administrative, tenure-track faculty in marketing at the CoB’s Hattiesburg campus are assistant professors William Smith and Michael Wittmann, and neither of these faculty has produced an A-level publication.

To add to the concerns about marketing’s viability as an ongoing concern, the Long Beach campus has, just today, added a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing to its already strained repertoire. That new degree was announced on 19-Feb-08, by Charmaine Williams of USM’s Public Relations Office, via a press released entitled “Southern Miss Gulf Coast to Offer Bachelor’s Degree in Marketing in Fall 2008,” the text of which is inserted below.

Southern Miss Gulf Coast to Offer Bachelor's Degree in Marketing in Fall 2008

Tuesday, February 19, 2008

Contact Charmaine Williams

LONG BEACH, Miss. – The College of Business at The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast will offer a bachelor’s degree in marketing beginning in the fall 2008 semester. The program, which will mirror the program on the Hattiesburg campus, is expected to accommodate the schedules of all students.

“We try to put students who are taking particular courses at particular times in a certain flow of classes so that they build on each other,” said Dr. Tony Henthorne, chair of the Department of Tourism Management, professor of marketing and executive editor of the publication, *Journal of Tourism: An International Research Journal on Travel and Tourism*. “We are looking at how best to sequence the timing of the classes so that we reach the largest student base that we have – both the traditional and non-traditional students.”

The new marketing major will allow the university to respond to the ongoing demand for marketing-related skill sets on the Gulf Coast says Dr. Alvin Williams, interim dean and professor in the College of Business.

“For a number of years, students and business leaders have expressed a strong interest in a marketing degree program on the Coast,” said Williams. “Given this demand and the strong economic potential on the Coast, it is important to prepare students for the varied opportunities in marketing. We anticipate strong

growth and rich job possibilities for graduates.”

There are a variety of career options for students who receive their Bachelor of Science in business administration degree, which include advertising, sales, marketing research, public relations and nonprofit marketing. For students not interested in a corporate career, a marketing degree is excellent preparation for entrepreneurship and small business management said Henthorne.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the release is the (highlighted) reaction of Interim Dean Alvin Williams, who states that the new marketing major on the Coast will allow USM and the CoB to “respond to the growing demand for marketing-related skill sets,” and that given “the demand . . . it is important to prepare students . . .” In these quotes, Williams speaks at some length about the *demand*. Of course, given today’s other news (i.e., the faculty jailbreak in marketing), Williams should have also given equal time to issues of *supply*, which will likely represent the undoing of the quality associated with the new program. These potential problems do not likely concern Williams because he won’t be sticking around to see how things play out – he is also departing the CoB, and for a professorship in business at the University of South Alabama.

As it stands, it looks like the brunt of the supply issues will fall on the shoulders of USM-GC marketing professor, Beth LaFleur, who was hired by the CoB just a few years ago from Nicholls State University, where she spent a good deal of time.



Beth LaFleur

It’s not likely that the CoB planned for today’s presser about the new marketing degree to coincide with the announcements that the CoB’s marketing faculty will be departing before the degree gets started. But, these are the “interesting times” the CoB has found itself in since 2003, with the arrival of former Dean Harold Doty.