

CoB News, 22 August 2008

“As a result of being the target of flattery and being caught in a style-over-substance quagmire overloaded with ‘strategic praise’ (Stengel, 2000: 14) from servile associates, deans begin to believe that they are, indeed, special. That is, they develop an overinflated sense of self as they come to believe that they are really as gifted and as intelligent as others tell them. In a word they begin to read and believe their own press releases.”

Arthur G. Bedeian, 2002

USM Textbook Scandal Expands to Online Fees

The Hattiesburg American higher education reporter, Valerie Wells, continues to produce interesting investigative reports on activities at USM. With her [20-August-08 story](#) entitled “Online fees add to costs,” Wells digs further into student fees controversies that have been plaguing USM for the past several days. Wells now reports that “online access codes” that are charged to USM students for Internet access to items ranging from online textbooks to class notes and/or exams wind up costing USM students as much as \$40 per course, if not more. Tracie Curry, a junior majoring in social work, told Wells that textbook prices are high enough without \$40 fees for online access to materials that students might use only a few times.

According to Jimmy Renfroe, manager at Campus Book Mart, students looking to purchase the online access codes separate from the required (recommended) textbook will face higher charges. Renfroe told Wells that “[a]ccess codes are usually part of a [textbook] package,” and that students are generally not allowed to sell back such bundles if the shrink wrap has already been compromised. With the heat generated by the recent textbook scandals, stories reported by both *The Hattiesburg American* and USMNEWS.net [[1](#), [2](#)], USM’s branch of Barnes & Noble seemed to want to distance itself from both growing controversies. B&N manager, Kathy Hayman, told Wells that B&N “hate[s] packaged deals . . . We want to sell used books.”

As for central administrators at USM, the public is finding that few of the top brass seem to know much about anything that goes on at the institution. Neither Robert Lyman, the new USM Provost, nor Eddie Holloway, the Dean of Students, claimed to know enough, if anything, about access codes and textbook prices to discuss the matter with Wells. Only USM’s Chief Information Officer, Homer Coffman, seemed capable of speaking intelligently on these matters. According to Coffman, the access codes that students purchase from the textbook outlets are separate from the “. . . fees [USM] students pay for online courses or courses that include elements of class management software such as Blackboard or WebCT.”

According to the picture painted by Coffman, costs at USM are rising faster than many students and parents first realized. A sense of how these controversies are playing in the local community is given by the comments to Wells’ most recent story. Some of these are inserted below:



DoTheDew3142 wrote:

They already charge us \$10/semester hour for online courses. I don't mind it if there are actual class sections offered, but I'm taking ENG 333, and it's only offered online. I've yet to hear a good reason for this extra charge. As for Access codes, they're a joke. Many times the student never uses them but pays for them.



haudi62 wrote:

"Eddie Holloway, DEAN OF STUDENTS, also said he was not familiar with the access codes."

Excuse the hell out of me.



ogal19 wrote:

I find it hard to believe that Eddie Holloway, dean of students, is not familiar with the extra fees charged for access codes. If this is true then I feel he has fallen short on his duties as dean of students.....he should be aware of ALL fees possibly charged to students. College textbooks are a scam!

As the inserts above make clear, the recent scandals at USM are not playing well in the Pine Belt and surrounding area.

Did Paster Get Promoted?

A recent visit to the CoB faculty profiles at usm.edu revealed some interesting new information about David Paster, a 2007-08 visiting instructor of tourism management. According to the website bio, Paster (M.B.A.) is no longer a visiting instructor in TM. Instead, he is now (2008-09) a "Professor of Practice," as the insert below shows.



David J. Paster, MBA/MUP/CCM
Professor of Practice
730 East Beach Boulevard
Long Beach, MS 39560
228.214.3259
david.paster@usm.edu

Though it is not known at this time whether Paster has been tenured, received a raise, or both, it seems as though he has been promoted. USMNEWS.net reporters continue to look into this situation, particularly with regard to the privileges that Paster may have acquired through what appears to be a significant elevation in academic rank.