

Dean Nail Speaks

An Analysis of the New CoB Dean's 27-Aug-08 E-Mail to Faculty and Staff

All indications from sources have been that new CoB dean, Lance Nail, has a legitimate shot at beginning the process of turning the CoB around. All that has remained since Nail came on board on 1-July-08 is some word from Nail himself. That word finally arrived via e-mail on 27-August-08, and USMNEWS.net is able to bring that to you here. Inserted below is Nail's recent e-mail to CoB faculty and staff.

From: "Lance A. Nail" <Lance.Nail@usm.edu>
To: sonia.gainesslittles@usm.edu, cob-facstaff@usm.edu
Subject: [Cob-facstaff] Welcome Back!
Date: Wed, 27 Aug 2008

Colleagues:

Now that everyone is back on campus I want to welcome everyone and hope that your semester is off to a great start. The good news is that CoB enrollment is up nearly 3% so far this fall and that bodes well for us in the future I hope.

As we prepare for the coming year I wanted to make a few brief announcements.

First of all, I would like to announce that Joe Peyrefitte has shortened his title by eliminating the "interim" from interim associate dean. I have spoken to many of you over the past several weeks and have found that Joe is respected as a trustworthy colleague by the faculty and staff and I am pleased to be working with Joe in the dean's office. So please take a moment to congratulate Joe when you have the chance.

Second, we will have our fall faculty and staff meeting on September 12th from 2:00 until 3:30 in JAG 115. I apologize for the somewhat short notice, but we had to reschedule due to a previous conflict and President Saunders and Provost Lyman requested an opportunity to speak at our meeting. So, we finally found a time that would work for the most people on the 12th. For our coast faculty, we are hoping to secure a van so that you may all ride together. After meeting with more than 50 faculty and staff members since arriving last month, I am anxious to share my ideas with you on how we might work together to advance our College of Business at our fall meeting. Please make every opportunity to attend.

Third, Ruthie and I will be hosting a faculty and staff mixer on the evening of the 12th in order to have some fellowship time outside of campus. Hopefully you have already received your invitation and will RSVP to Lisa soon. Ruthie and I are very much looking forward to getting to know everyone better - both on campus and off.

Finally, I am work ing through committee assignments now and hope to release these assignments soon. I must admit that I am a bit unaccustomed to the dean having so much control over faculty committees and will be seeking your input on restructuring the selection of the committees to a model of greater shared governance. That being said, I will compose and charge the committees by the first of next week for the coming year and will work with you for an improved model for next year.

Many thanks to you for a smooth start to the academic year. Several of you have made sacrifices on scheduling for the good of the college and please know that I am grateful for this help. Problems and complaints in the dean's office have not been overwhelming, so I feel that we are off to a great start!

Looking forward to seeing everyone on the 12th and in the hallways in JAG and Long Beach until then. Best-

Lance

Lance A. Nail, PhD, CFA
Dean and Professor
College of Business
University of Southern Mississippi

There are several points in Nail's e-mail above that are worthy of analysis. These are bulleted below:

- Nail begins by naming Joseph Peyrefitte as the new, permanent associate dean for the CoB. Nail attributes this choice to Peyrefitte's popularity in the CoB, a point USMNEWS.net sources did not refute. They do point out, however, that Peyrefitte's research program, which was not stellar to begin with, has likely been seriously hampered by his recent stint as interim AD. As such, Peyrefitte's acceptance of Nail's AD offer was likely borne out of necessity.
- The announcement that USM President, Martha Saunders, and new USM Provost, Robert Lyman, plan to address CoB faculty/staff at the fall 2008 CoB convocation must be intriguing to those who work in Greene Hall. What is it that Saunders and Lyman wish to say to CoBers? Will they be addressing any of the administrative malfeasance that has been alleged by various CoB faculty and staff over the past few months and years?
- Nail's continued reference to Joseph Greene Hall ("JGH") as Joseph A. Greene ("JAG") is subtle, yet potentially significant. Sources have told USMNEWS.net on numerous occasions that the culture in the CoB needs a complete overhaul. Nail's "renaming" of the environment may be the first seeds of that process.
- Nail's comment about being "unaccustomed to the dean having so much control over [the composition of] faculty committees" is a serious slap at the Doty-Niroomand administrative approach. According to Nail, a process of committee selection that includes greater shared governance is in the offing for the CoB. This is exactly the kind of condemnation that could ultimately doom the job market prospects of former CoB dean, Harold Doty, and former CoB associate dean, Farhang Niroomand. Nail's reputation outside of the CoB is good, and this kind of statement will carry a lot of weight as it is disseminated throughout the academic world, a process sources tell us will certainly occur.

Though some may characterize Nail's beginning as cautious, it is difficult to argue that he is off to anything other than a good, solid start. From the looks of the e-mail above, and from what sources are relaying to USMNEWS.net, the CoB's future looks much brighter than its recent past.