

DEAR USMNEWS.NET

Dear usmnews.net,

Did you see the [WDAM TV interview](#) with Dr. Rodney Bennett [the IHL's "preferred candidate" for the presidency of USM]? According to the [written] report and the video of the interview, Dr. Bennett's announced "[o]ne of the first items of business will be to hire a chief financial officer."

I looked at the USM website and Tom Estes is serving as interim CFO. Dr. Bennett offers no explanation for the apparent urgency of replacing Dr. Estes. He did not indicate that that Dr. Estes is in a hurry to return to retirement. Dr. Estes obviously has interim President Lucas' confidence and I have heard nothing but good things about his past and present service. What is Dr. Bennett trying to tell us about the financial situation at USM?

Name withheld by request

Dear Name withheld,

As happens frequently, a number of readers and our reporters had some version of the same question. Here are some of them.

Why did Dr. Bennett single out this position as having any particular urgency?

What heretofore hidden financial issue is about to surface?

Is the mess left by Martha Saunders worse than anyone realized?

When you have an experienced interim CFO, why is filling that spot more important than finding a dean for the College of Business?

Given University Counsel's role in blessing the [Ellis] Johnson contract [that put the University on the hook for more than \$2 million while Johnson makes more than \$800K per year as a coach at another university], it seems that replacing University counsel would be more important [than replacing Dr. Estes].