

CoB Economists Boiling Over

by Duane Cobb

The level of anger coming from the CoB's economists is reaching new heights with every day passing day. Since being informed last week that their programs, and employment lines, are to be cut by USM, members of this group have been posting anonymously to various Internet message boards. In some cases, their anger has manifested itself in vile comments aimed at USM administrators. And recently, the public barbs have been hurled at rank-and-file USM faculty. Things have gotten so bad over at the *USM Forum – Message Board* that the board's moderator had to remove some of the ECOers' comments, which were aimed at a rank-and-filer.

What this is coming to no one yet knows. We can tell, though, that the next nine months are going to be hell on earth for many in the CoB, and above. It will be a miracle if much, or anything, gets done this year in USM's b-school. While the cutting of economics will have no *real* effect on AACSB accreditation, having a bunch of scorned economists fouling up the works every day between now and June 30, 2010, will no doubt have some deleterious effects on accreditation. The CoB's Peer Review Team will be coming back in 2012, so this could be a critical year.

Only two CoB economists – George Carter and Mark Klinedinst – have gone public to date. Their accusations range from a lack of "due process" to "subterfuge," neither of which paint a nice picture of the Martha Saunders or

Lance Nail administrations. These comments were made to a reporter with *Inside Higher Ed*, so a fair number of academicians have poured over them by now. Over on the websites, the economists are anonymously employing selective memory, blaming the Nail administration for pushing through curriculum changes that were adverse to ECO by way of an intimidating (to junior faculty) e-mail voting system. These same economists seem to forget that their guru in all things bad, former CoB associate dean and *economist* Farhang Niroomand, essentially invented the e-mail voting system, and precisely for the purpose that the economists are wailing on about now. What's next?

Part of this story should surprise no one. Former EFIB chair George Carter did a lot of damage to the department in his second reign as chair (2005-09). His actions in recent days are a continuation of that behavior. Only now as a rank-and-filer himself, Carter's current actions are dismantling what's left of his reputation, both on campus and in the Hattiesburg community. Some of Carter's long-time opponents and critics are no doubt cheering on his downward spiral. The CoB, however, may be too fragile to withstand the train wreck that seems to be coming down the line.