

Might USM Lose One-Sixth of its Faculty?

by Duane Cobb

According to Elizabeth Crisp's 23-Jan-2011 [report](#) for *The Clarion Ledger*, more than one-third of USM's psychology faculty "has offers in hand for better paying jobs." Wow! If this is applied across the board, it's possible that more than one-third of all USM faculty currently sit on offers from other colleges, universities, government agencies, and private sector entities that pay more than those same faculty are currently earning at USM. And unlike their counterparts at Mississippi State University, these USM faculty have no prospect for ending a multi-year raise draught with ESPN television revenue-funded faculty bonuses, courtesy of the athletics department.

Yes, faculty and staff raises have been off the table for some time now. Unless you're in "the Martha Saunders administration," your pay hasn't budged in a good while. With budget cuts totaling about \$10 million already in the bag (for FY11), and others as much as \$15 million looming (for FY 12), there's no doubt USM faculty have been testing the job market waters. And if the psychology department's recent experience is any indication, those waters are very comfortable, despite what USM provost Robert Lyman says about the regional and national climate facing university faculty.

Let's assume that less than half of the "more than one-third" of USM psychology profs depart this year. That leaves room for as much as one-

sixth of that department to vacate their posts in USM's College of Education & Psychology before the start of 2011-12. Applied university-wide, this model comes to about 80 total USM faculty departing in just a few months. Of course, some of these might also be impending retirees, who respond positively to USM's retirement incentive program. Still, assuming only "one-sixth" in total losses from "more than one-third" with offers in hand might be conservative. So, the damage to USM's human resources situation from the current fiscal crisis could be enormous.

Some of these profs might walk with \$40,000 as a retirement bonus, enter the PERS at \$40,000 per year, and land a new university post earning \$100,000 per year. That's a nice haul, making such a move easily worth consideration. That might ultimately mean that USM will lose 80-160 faculty before 2011-12, and with little or no time for scheduling adjustments. Might that also mean that USM deans will have to do the unthinkable, and teach a full load of courses during fall and spring of 2011-12? Not likely . . . nothing is ever *that bad*, is it?