

## ECO Faculty to Appeal, Students to Protest

According to *The Hattiesburg American's* Ed Kemp, in his [23-Aug-09 article](#) entitled "Students against faculty cuts," USM students have delivered a petition to USM president Martha Saunders asking that she delay the termination of the CoB's 9 tenured/tenure-track faculty. One of the petition's drafters, junior economics major Zach Mansell, told Kemp that the petition had 60-80 signatures on it. He also informed Kemp that there will be a student gathering in front of the Aubrey K. Lucas Administration Building on Monday 24-Aug-09 at 9:00am. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that the 70 or so signatures contained on Mansell's petition represents only 0.44% of the USM student body, using the oft-cited figure of 16,000 students.

Kemp also reports that USM Faculty Senate president Jeffrey Evans sent a letter on Friday to Saunders expressing the FS' "anguish" regarding the potential loss of the 9 economists. According to Evans, the CoB's economics department (1) plays a "large role" in educating USM students, and (2) brings "acclaim" to the institution from its scholarly activities. Evans also added that the FS believed the process resulting in a recommendation to eliminate the economics majors "was flawed." A number of reports here at USMNEWS.net refute some of what Evans had to say. For one, the CoB's economics department graduates fewer than 5 students each year, at least in terms of "economics degrees." Second, the CoB's economists are rapidly falling in terms of their research profile within the CoB. What was once a vibrant group has fallen off substantially with the recent loss of key faculty. Sources say that in some instances these faculty were driven out by the current group of economics faculty and/or their supporters.

Finally, Kemp's article brings to light a letter to Saunders from the USM chapter of the AAUP, which also calls into question the decision to eliminate the 9 economists. That letter criticizes the idea of making such sweeping changes to the University after only "two weeks" of deliberation. However, as reported by *The Hattiesburg American* and other news outlets, the Academic Planning Group has been meeting since fall 2008 to discuss the financial crisis at USM. Again, sources tell USMNEWS.net that many of the criticisms coming from USM faculty bodies seemed to be based in misinformation. Additionally, readers of *The Hattiesburg American* do not seem to be buying the criticism and arguments from these same faculty groups, as the comments below attest.

**Neweaglefan01** wrote:

I have to agree with careerwriter and would add these points.

- 1) Would the students protesting be willing to pay higher tuition to support the faculty members?
- 2) Since two members of the faculty senate were on the committee that recommended these cuts why are they against them now? The same goes for the representative of the American Association of University Professors.
- 3) How many professors at the university are eligible for retirement? If those eligible would retire it could go a long way to help cut costs.
- 4) The cuts are not optional, nor are they the fault of the University. Those that criticize the recommendations of the committee should at least provide reasonable alternatives. They should also read the minutes of the meetings so they could have some knowledge of how these decisions were arrived at.

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careerwriter wrote:

Don't back down, President Saunders. You HAVE to cut costs. 9 majors in 5 years and 9 professors is excessive, and yes the core Economics can be taught very well by other faculty in the business college. 60 to 80 students out of 15K? Get real, HA. That is not even worth reporting. Also, the faculty senate and the AAUP are more worried about this setting a precedent at USM (enrollment deciding cuts) than about the Economics department. It is time that the faculty, staff and students get a reality check and realize that this university can no longer operate as we have in the past. Every dollar must now be justified with how many students sign up for your majors. No more esteem majors and degrees can be tolerated with low enrollment and extremely low faculty/student ratios. We are a state school, not a private school. We can't just raise tuition 500 percent if we need the money, as private schools can. We have to end the waste so that prosperous programs can survive.

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Meanwhile, *The Student Printz's* Meryl Dakin has penned another report, this one appearing on [22-Aug-09](#) and entitled "Student, Faculty groups respond to termination of department." Dakin's newest report focuses on the student petition co-organized by Mansell, who stated every major in the CoB is represented on the petition. He also said that 22 of the 24 residents of the CoB's new Honors House have signed the petition.



According to Dakin's story, the student-led demonstration at the AKL Building will be a "silent demonstration," set to commence at 9:00am on 24-Aug-09 so as to coincide with the beginning of the oral appeals of the budget cuts (to the USM administration). Also quoted in Dakin's latest story is CoB economics professor Mark Klinedinst, who is the president of AAUP-USM. Klinedinst said that the organization voted overwhelmingly to support ECO.

Table 1 below contains a brief summary of some of the public statements that have been made to date by the CoB's economics faculty. The full professors are listed in blue, the associates in green and the assistants in red, and the cells containing *unt*enured faculty are shaded.

**Table 1 – Summary of CoB Economists' Public Statements**

CoB Economists	Public Statements Regarding Cuts
Carter, George	Told <i>Inside Higher Ed</i> that Saunders admin involved in subterfuge Told <i>The Hattiesburg American</i> & <i>The Student Printz</i> that ECO was targeted
Dakhliya, Sami	Told <i>The Hattiesburg American</i> that CoB dean Lance Nail's data are incorrect
Gevrek, Deniz	
Green, Trellis	

Gunther, William	Told <i>The Student Printz</i> that cuts were made in the dark, without participation
Klinedinst, Mark	Told <i>Inside Higher Ed</i> that USM administrators don't follow appropriate policies
Marvasti, Akbar	
Monchuk, Daniel	
Nissan, Edward	

It is interesting that Edward Nissan has yet to speak out against the cuts. As a tenured, full professor, it would seem he would be contributing by now. If he had offered Dakhli's criticisms perhaps Dakhli could have heretofore avoided the fray. To a lesser extent sources say the same could be stated about Akbar Marvasti.