

## ECO Plan Calls for Sacrifice of Five Faculty

According to higher education reporter Ed Kemp's [1-Sept-09 article](#) in *The Hattiesburg American* entitled "USM terminates 3 professors," the CoB's senior economists proposed a plan to the USM administration – during a closed-door meeting on 24-Aug-09 – that would have five members of its group retire after 2009-10 so that four other economics professors can continue on with their careers at USM after the end of 2009-10. This plan, which has yet to be agreed to by USM's central administration, was presented to USM provost Robert Lyman and USM president Martha Saunders in response to the Saunders administration's decision to eliminate the CoB's economics majors and terminate its 9 tenured/tenure-track faculty. The cut would take effect on 1-July-10.

Kemp reports an interview with economics professor Mark Klinedinst, wherein Klinedinst informed Kemp that the CoB's economists "negotiated a deal" with USM administrators whereby five professors will "retire" if the institution agrees to continue its employment relationship with the group's remaining four members. As detailed by Klinedinst, the five planned retirements are for himself, George Carter, Trellis Green, William Gunther, and Edward Nissan. According to USMNEWS.net documents, these five retirements would save USM a whopping \$534,200 in salaries alone, and about \$650,000 when fringes are added. This figure would increase when considerations for the continued suspension of the CoB's Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER), which is directed by Gunther, are added.

Why did the economics group propose such a solution? According to what Klinedinst stated to Kemp, "[w]e wanted to save [USM] the embarrassment of being the only major university in the country not to have an economics program . . . [a]nd we wanted to spare them the embarrassment of firing faculty without an adequate hearing." Sources tell USMNEWS.net, however, that George Carter, one of the proposal's architects, has participated in firing CoB faculty without having provided adequate hearings, and yet did not seem embarrassed by doing so. Thus, whether Saunders or Lyman are embarrassed is still at issue.

Klinedinst also informed Kemp that part of the plan calls for moving the remaining four economists – Deniz Gevrek, Daniel Monchuk, Sami Dakhliya and Akbar Marvasti – into the College of Arts & Letters. CoAL dean Denise von Herrmann informed Kemp that, as of a week since the proposal, she had received no such word of such a move. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that absorbing the four economists would cost von Herrmann *more than \$300,000 annually*, funds she does not likely possess at this time. The CoAL dean has also been one of the most vocal critics of having \$1 million in university funds spent in order to support the CoB's economists, which exist only in a service capacity. Therefore, it is not likely that von Herrmann would support such a move at this particular time.

Interestingly, Kemp's article, in describing the ECO proposal, refers to Gevrek and the others as the CoB's "remaining four *younger* professors." Documents housed in USMNEWS.net's library, however, show that Marvasti's rocky academic career dates back the mid-1980s, or when Klinedinst began his career at USM. Thus, it is not altogether clear why he is referred to as "younger," or why he would remain behind. A second member of the group, Sami Dakhli, has been fired once already (by the University of Alabama in 2006 or so, and for lack of productivity), so it also remains unclear why von Herrmann would be asked to retain him as well. He is also reportedly older than three of the four most recent CoB economists to have departed since 2003. Only former CoBer Charles Sawyer is older than Dakhli from among this group.

Finally, judging by some of the comments left behind by *THA* readers, the CoB economists are once again infiltrating websites to get the message out that they are top-quality academicians. The comments that lead sources to draw such a conclusion are inserted below.

**algrant** wrote:

Those professors who are retiring are excellent teachers and will be missed. Also, those who remain are very qualified and Southern Miss is lucky to have them. It would be a shame to have a business program and a MBA program without any economics courses. Whoever proposed the removal of the department completely is an idiot. We are known as Mississippi's business school. As such, it is crucial to have an economics department to have ANY credibility. I admire these professors for putting the esteem of the business school above their own needs. It's as if the administrators of the university have forgotten what's important.

9/1/2009 9:08:56 AM

**lifizgud** wrote:

Replying to hcinms:

*So basically, if you want to take economics classes you will have to learn a foreign language. Look at the names.*

I currently take a class under Deniz Gevrek and she speaks English as plain as anyone. She is a fabulous instructor who loves to teach....this comment was uncalled for. If you don't know them, don't talk about them.

9/1/2009 9:23:14 AM

**PeteEagle** wrote:

Replying to hcinms:

*So basically, if you want to take economics classes you will have to learn a foreign language. Look at the names.*

Sami also speaks perfect English. Seems like you are clueless.

9/1/2009 9:46:00 AM