

From BigGold Nation

Some thoughts from a USM Fan

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USM fans don't speak positively about our alma mater, who will? ***We will if given a reason to do so. No one should be a sheeple - go along to get along.***

Having posed those goals, I think I will give it a try, addressing a few topics I saw discussed on my brief survey of this board this morning.

1. Dr. Rodney Bennett is more than qualified to lead our institution. ***You must have low standards. I would not have chosen him to be the President at one of our community colleges much less the President of one of our three primary state universities.***

2. He is also "one of us": he is a Southerner. He understands our background, and what's important to us as Mississippians and Southerners. ***No he is not one of us but to me that is not important. My President selection would have been one that would have worked to make Southern Miss the catalyst for substantial growth in economic activity in south Mississippi along the lines of the research triangle in North Carolina. Our grads have to leave Mississippi to find good paying jobs and that has to change.***

3. I feel confident that Dr. Bennett, like nearly everyone who has ever walked this earth, has ambitions to do the best for himself and his family. That is not wrong. And from the perspective of Southern Miss, that is a good thing. If the University is successful, so will he be. ***You have that backwards, as our President the university's success will depend heavily on his leadership. I believe he does not have the experience or drive to work the college board and State legislature to place us in a position to move ahead of Old Miss and Mistake without them even understanding what he has done. He will need to seek donors that will put in a position where the board and legislature can not say no.***

4. Dr. Bennett has a clear-eyed focus on the challenges facing our University (and higher education in general). He is not a placeholder. He won't take a called third strike. He is going to make us better, or go down swinging. ***B.S. You lack vision as well. We can be much more than a institute of Higher education. We need to be a economic catalyst for south Mississippi and Southern Miss grads. The return on investment by Mississippi tax payers is poor when our best***

grads move to New Orleans, Texas, Georgia, Alabama to find jobs and pay taxes there.

5. Dr. Bennett will make mistakes (or at least decisions you or I don't like). That is what happens when someone advances in their career; there is a learning curve. But there is also a learning curve for us as fans of the Eagles and supporters of the University. I thought Jeff Bower should have been fired when he posted losing records 2 of his first 3 seasons, becoming only the second Southern Miss coach since Pooley Hubert in 1993 and 1934 to have two losing seasons. I was wrong, as after 1993 Coach Bower ran off a streak of 14 consecutive winning seasons. In his field Jeff Bower had the experience, drive, and intelligence to be a success. I would question Dr. Bennett's experience. Dr. Bennett is now running the largest employer and biggest business in South Mississippi and he has zero business education. I would say he is unprepared to lead us "to the top".

6. Even after Dr. Bennett settles into the job, he will make decisions we don't like. I'm sure when I get home today I will learn that my wife made at least one decision today I don't like. I will have to remind myself that just because she and I are committed to the same goals does not preclude all differences of opinion. When Dr. Bennett makes a decision you don't like, see items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 above. ***Decisions can not be made in a vacuum. A good leader will gather all the information he or she can before coming to a decision. Selecting friends an family over more qualified candidates is not a good decision. Yes he may make a decision that I may not agree with (see new head of business college). What I expect is that he has the vision and skills to turn our small time university into a regional power house instead of a finishing school for teachers.***

Unless we see hard, rocky (or windy) evidence, we should refrain from shouting that the sky is falling on Hattiesburg. If we are confronted with such evidence (not unfounded reporting, rumors and innuendo), we shouldn't panic. The sky has been falling on Southern Miss for over 100 years. Southern Miss folks don't panic. We strap on a helmet, stride back out onto the field, and renew the fight. To the Top! ***Yes the sky really has been falling on Southern Miss for a 100 years. We are a small time directional college in the poorest, lowest standard of living state in the country. Some of you can be satisfied with that standing. I am not! It is much more than sports. We have to move beyond saying we want to be on the top to actually taking the steps to get there not just in sports but in everything we do. What good is it to keep saying "to the top" when we do not have a plan to do to get there other than producing winning sports teams.***

Former USM President General McCain added the upper deck on our stadium before OLD Miss and Mistake did the same for there stadiums. How did he pull that feat off. Is it any bigger a challenge than adding engineering, law, dental, vet schools to Southern Miss so that we can provide those education opportunities to students living in South Mississippi therefore eliminating the need for them to travel to North Mississippi to

earn degrees? Taxpayers live in South Mississippi too.

I would work with employers in south Mississippi and the legislature to provide internships to our juniors/seniors. I would work with employers to establish our curriculum so that our students can walk into their positions and become immediately effective. Our students would become in high demand which equates to high salaries.

One if not our top objective would be to expand our research capabilities and then our research funding. We need 100s of new start -up, high tech companies doing business in South Mississippi. These companies will create an economic explosion in South Mississippi. The economic potential of our Gulf Coast is not being maximized. untapped.

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