

Has Grade Inflation Peaked, Yet?

Dear Colleagues,

Do you have the feeling you have just been strong-armed to give grades -- note the key word "give" -- that will retain students and "creat[e] pathways" for their graduation?

President Bennett says,

From: all-facstaff-bounces@usm.edu [all-facstaff-bounces@usm.edu] on behalf of
USM Mailout [usmmailout@usm.edu]
Sent: Monday, April 08, 2013 1:29 PM
To: all-facstaff@usm.edu
Subject: [All-facstaff] Message from the President Regarding Proposed Change to
Board of Trustees Funding Formula

Faculty and Staff,

...The revised funding formula currently under consideration by the trustees contains performance benchmarks related to ***student retention, progression, and graduation rates. Universities that support student success best will be rewarded under the proposal.*** Our communication with the board related to the funding formula continues to be excellent, and the trustees are using accurate data related to enrollment growth, faculty salaries, and more, to guide their decision.

With that in mind, I encourage you to remember that every interaction with a student creates an opportunity for you to say or do something that helps them succeed. We should, and must, do all that we can to support students. If you work at Southern Miss, you are an educator, and I expect that ***we are all working toward creating pathways to degree completion for our students...***

Emphasis added.

From: all-facstaff-bounces@usm.edu [all-facstaff-bounces@usm.edu] on behalf of
USM Mailout [usmmailout@usm.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, April 09, 2013 8:08 AM
To: all-facstaff@usm.edu
Subject: [All-facstaff] Message from the President Regarding the University Budget

Faculty/Staff,

...While this is good news [the upcoming year will see no cut in appropriations—but, no mention was made beyond 2013], ***we must remain vigilant in our commitment to ensuring student success. Student retention, progression and graduation***

demand our continued attention, now and in the future...

Where is performance and learning in Dr. Bennett's definition of success? According to his email, you are to retain, progress and graduate, presumably at all costs. Stated a little differently, you are to keep paying butts in the seats. If you give Ds and Fs, no matter how well deserved, will your future at USM prove doubtful? Do you think students will get wind of this? If they do, guess what that will mean to their performance?

Be sure to continue reading our reports about Dr. Bennett's CV. Apropos of this report, he has very little teaching experience and next to no research experience. He may have no idea the environment he's creating.