

# Guess who is Scrambling for a Vacated ECO Line

## *A Guest Column by Susan Greene-Lewis*

The ink is barely dry on reports that the CoB's Sami Dakhliya, associate professor of economics, is leaving USM for a university in France and already there is a race to recycle his salary line. Or is it former CoB ECO faculty Deniz Gevrek's old line some want? In terms of specifics, it doesn't really matter at all – there's money in the trough and the usual, old resource hogs are lining up to get at it.

One would think that George Carter is leading this charge, and he may well be. But, the reports recently arriving at USMNEWS.net's news offices say that it's professor Mark Klinedinst who is making the most waves when it comes to gobbling up the money left behind by the surprise departures of Deniz Gevrek, who joined the economics faculty at Texas A&M at Corpus Christi in January of this year, and the aforementioned Dakhliya. Either way, though, there is some budgetary trouble with trying to revive the USM careers of either Carter or Klinedinst.

First, the institution is staring down the tracks at a \$15 million budget cut in the very near future (that cut could actually climb to \$20 million according to some with knowledge of the desperate situation). Thus, now hardly seems the time to be begging USM administrators to pull one out of a forced retirement deal. This is what Carter or Klinedinst would, of course, be doing in this instance. This problem is compounded by the fact that Carter currently earns \$130,940 over 9 months,

while Klinedinst banks \$91,560 over the same time period (these are according to most recent data). Dakhliya, on the other hand, is being paid \$84,064, while Gevrek was picking up only \$75,000 per year during her brief stint in Hattiesburg. If USM is serious about its budget-cutting, then bringing either (or both) of these economists back into the fold will not work.

A number of reports here at USMNEWS.net have pointed out that Klinedinst has not published an indexed academic journal article since 1998. How's that for giving taxpayers something for their money? On the merits, Carter makes a better case for getting his old gig back. At least he teams up with good friend Edward Nissan on occasion to produce a C-level publication or two. In terms of teaching, however, perhaps the nod should go to Klinedinst. His talents are likely more diverse, and it would seem that students generally favor him more than Carter. That could be due to the "life coaching" that Carter tends to engage his students in during class time, but that's a story for another day (and one that has been covered in past reports and editorials).

What this situation really represents is an opportunity for USM constituencies to see how committed the administration of the institution is to following through with the kinds of decisions that have to be made when it is being told to slash budgets. The August-09 phase of cuts resulted in eliminations of a small number of ed tech

faculty and five of nine economists. Some ed tech faculty were saved. Now we are thinking about saving one (or more) economist? If it happens, either the institution will never make any *real* cuts – which doesn't seem to be the way out – or some other areas of USM will face the same axe that has been hitting the CoB in recent months (see stories about MIS). The latter outcome seems more likely than the former. And, if economists continue to escape the cutting at the expense of liberal arts and/or ed/psych faculty, you can bet that ECO's (and the CoB's) reputation around campus will continue to sour.

If it truly is a race between Carter and Klinedinst for the vacated money, I would bet on Klinedinst, and not just because of the financials (i.e., the salary comparisons). Klinedinst has his feet planted in the faculty senate and other campus bodies. Carter isn't as well connected these days. Either way, apart from the financial details of this scenario, in saving either one (or both) of these economists, Saunders will be rescuing individuals who accused her and others in her administration, via the *national* media, of a "subterfuge." Having done so, even Carter would predict that it's time for someone to "get stuffed."