

*Guest Editorial*

## **Mission Impossible Getting a Straight Answer out of AD Bill McGillis**

Yesterday I read [Dear usmnews.net](#) and clicked on the citation to Jason Munz's [Hattiesburg American's sports writer] [interview](#) with Southern Miss athletic director Bill McGillis. It appears the Rodney Bennett administration is pushing USM's new athletic director, out front to deflect criticism of the institution's disastrous athletics program. Including its practice of providing its athletics department with extra millions of dollars in financial assistance from student tuition revenue, student fees and E&G (education and general) funds.

One of the problems is that McGillis seems to have the inability to provide a straight answer to a simple question. Here's one example, but it just happens to be the one I picked as an example for this editorial.

**Q.** Have you seen any change, in terms of contributions or fundraising, since you've been at Southern Miss?

**A.** I think people believe in Todd Monken. I think people feel good about his leadership and that the program can have success again. Understandably, this is a very proud program with rich tradition. So, this is an excruciating time for people that care about Southern Miss. I recognize that, and I respect that. And I appreciate that people care enough that it hurts all of us like it does. But the emotion that's conveyed to me is some disappointment, some fear, some shock — much more so than anger. But along with that, a lot of people — a lot of people — have conveyed hope and promise for the future. I think our fans can see that with continuity and the strong positive leadership that coach Monken has demonstrated, that bright days are ahead.

**Q.** So you would say contributions and fundraising, given all the circumstances, haven't been negatively affected?

**A.** I would say most people can see beyond two football seasons. Most people that are in the Eagle Club, that are season ticket holders, and most people in our community that care about Southern Miss football have invested in it for a long time and will continue to invest in it for a long time.

Twice Munz tried to determine if there has been any increase or decrease in contributions or fundraising. Twice McGillis refused to simply answer the question that was asked of him.

Apparently, McGillis thinks we are all idiots.

Given Southern Miss' history of proclaiming any contribution, one has to assume the answer is contributions and fund raising have been negatively impacted. A visit to the [Athletic Foundation webpage](#) (which has not been updated recently) seems to confirm that conclusion. [The 2012 Audit Form](#) confirms the financial problems. The Athletic Foundation shows a little over \$1.5 million in net assets [Assets – Liabilities = Net Assets].

Why not simply answer the question. If he had, I suspect they would have read something like this. "We've had two really bad years. Contributions have been negatively impacted." At least he would have some credibility.