

"If We Believe It . . . They Will Come"

Why Dean Lance Nail Needs to Get William Gunther Out of the Public Eye

USM constituents are all too familiar with professor William Gunther's role in USM's CoB. Gunther heads the CoB's Bureau of Business and Economic Development, and in that capacity he often has occasion to speak out about the nation's (and Mississippi's) current economic crisis. In ["With All Due Respect, Mr. Gunther . . ."](#) we learned just how pro-"big government" Gunther is, a position that stands in stark contrast to Mississippi's national (Sen. Thad Cochran), state (Gov. Haley Barbour; Lt. Gov., and USM favorite, Phil Bryant) and local (MS Sens. Tom King and Joey Fillingane) political representatives. There, wherein Gunther's Feb-09 interview with *WDAM-TV* is examined, he cheers mightily for the \$500 billion federal stimulus package, saying the U.S. has no other options. Of course, local readers of *The Hattiesburg American*, along with a slew of famous academic economists, dispute Gunther's assertions (in the interview).

With Gunther, nothing seems to sink in, as made plainly clear in his [5-March-09 interview](#) with Meryl Dakin of *The Student Printz*. There Gunther dismisses Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal's concerns about the plan as a "purely political response," again reiterating that ". . . the issue is we have to do something." Then, only one day after his talk to *TSP*, Gunther is again badgering South Mississippians (via a [6-March-09 interview](#) with *THA's* Emma James) to dig deeper into their shallow psychological reservoir and pull Mississippi and the U.S. out of the throes of the recession. In his interview with James for "Recession psychological, professor says" (inserted below), Gunther says the U.S. recession "is 90 percent psychological and 10 percent economics. The glass is half full is the attitude we have to have in order to get through this."

Clearly, Gunther's lectures are wearing thin with the general public. Nowhere is this more evident than with the sentiments expressed by [eagle78](#), who posted the following message on *THA's* website:

[eagle78](#) wrote:

This professor thinks that it is 90% psychological 10% economics....well, Mr. Professor..I take it USM isn't laying off yet. Maybe if you had just gotten laid off your views would be completely different. Most of the people are not getting laid off due to Christmas....those are hired for "temporary" positions thus aren't eligible for unemployment benefits. If you go through the system to get benefits such as unemployment or economic assistance, you will find the system cluttered with people in the same situation as your family. It's hard to be positive when there is not another job to go to because no one is hiring. Also, hard to be positive and think the glass is half full when its your last glass.

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It almost goes without saying that Gunther's presence in the public eye, particularly with regard his *cheerleading* for the current administration (government spending) vis-à-vis the economic and fiscal crises, puts him, and the academic institution he represents, in a political (hot) mess. At this rate, Gunther might as well begin endorsing, and under the USM and CoB BBER banners, political candidates. Given the way the BBER is acting, one can almost sense a new CoB course, in concert with the College of Education & Psychology, in the offing. That one? How does "Psychosomatic Economic Recessions" strike you?

Recession psychological, professor says

BY EMMA JAMES • AMERICAN STAFF WRITER • MARCH 6, 2009

The challenges that the current recession pose are psychological as well as economical, said Bill Gunther, professor and director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Southern Mississippi, during the Area Development Partnership monthly First Friday meeting.

The attitude that consumers take will determine how long the current recession lasts, Gunther said.

“Attitude matters,” he said. “This recession is 90 percent psychological and 10 percent economics. The glass is half full is the attitude we have to have in order to get through this.”

While the attitude necessary might be positive, most of the numbers are grim. The state of Mississippi lost a total of 26,200 jobs in 2008 while Hattiesburg lost 2,500, mostly in the manufacturing, retail and leisure and hospitality categories. The state’s unemployment rate jumped to 9.2 percent from 7.6 percent in December according to unadjusted numbers released by the Mississippi Department of Employment Security Wednesday.

Those numbers, however, Gunther said, don’t take the time of year into account when calculating job losses.

“The period between December and January is the time when you see the most layoffs because of the holidays,” Gunther said. “Part of this may be from people working in temporary positions during the holidays.

Gunther said that a seasonally-adjusted report to be released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics next week will provide a clearer picture of unemployment rates, although he expects Mississippi’s unemployment rate to easily exceed 9 percent within the next six months.

The national unemployment rate is 8.5 percent.

For more on this story, see Saturday’s edition of the Hattiesburg American.