

## *Questions from usmnews.net's readers*

Lately usmnews.net has been receiving a number of questions from its readers. From time to time, usmnews.net will publish some of the questions and provide answers.

**Question 18:** It's been a while since you've posted any questions. Anything going on?

**Answer:** It's been a busy fall and winter, with quite a bit of travelling. We recently got back from Chicago, which was cold and snowy. While business took a lot of time, we did squeeze in a trip to the opera (LaTraviata – my wife loves Verdi), and to Shakespeare Theater.



**Question 17:** Have you placed any bets on the outcome of the Southern Miss v. North Texas game on Saturday?

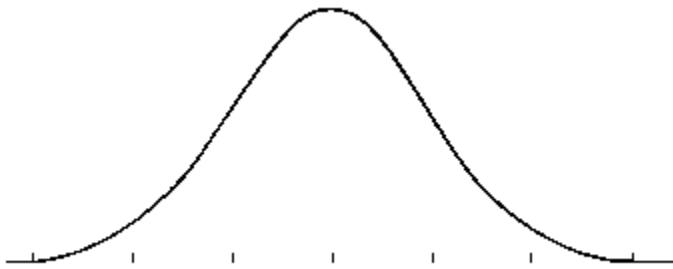
**Answer:** I only gamble on Wall Street, but I won't be surprised if North Texas wins. While [North Texas](#) hasn't had a great year (4-3), it certainly hasn't suffered a USM scale disaster (0-6 this year and 0-12 last year). With that said, there is always hope. According to [President Bennett](#), "as Coach Monken says, we are going to win. It is only a matter of time." And, the good news is, President Bennett and friends won't be wasting lots of our money flying AirFarce One to an away game.

**Question 16:** You don't seem to be a sports fan. Is that why you publish so many negative articles about sports?

**Answer:** Actually, I do like sports. What I don't like is wasting students' and taxpayers' hard earned money. It's a function of priorities. Since USM can't afford to compete and sports at USM lose money, don't you think the money would be better spent elsewhere? The mission of the University should be to educate its students as cost effectively as possible -- not fund sports events that few students, alumnae or locals attend.

**Question 16:** Do you think Southern Miss' students are generally of poor quality?

**Answer:** USM has some really fine students that could compete at the best schools in the country. I have taught many of them. However, what I began to observe was, the number of good students remained about the same, but the number of students who really weren't prepared for college continued to increase. More and more students were falling at the wrong end of the distribution. This may explain, at least in part, USM's extraordinarily poor graduation rate. While the following is not based on hard data, I think it gives you an idea of what I'm talking about. (The right side of both diagrams shows the A students and the left shows the failing students.) The academic quality of USM's student body seemed to have moved from this:



To this



Administrators' insistence on "retention" and "graduation rate" increases will only exacerbate grade inflation. Keep in mind that grade inflation has been underway for some time. Employers will notice.

**Question 15:** You haven't mentioned much about your work or travel this summer. Have you been staying home?

**Answer:** It's been a hectic (and profitable) summer. We just got back from Houston. Around business, we managed to squeeze in a showing of "Wicked." If you haven't seen the play, I strongly recommend it.



Anytime you are in Houston, try The Four Seasons. Service is great and the chef makes outstanding omelets. It also has my favorite fitness center.

**Question 14:** Just out of curiosity, how long have you been married?

**Answer:** Thirty seven years in September. I'm looking for ideas how to celebrate; so if anyone has any drop me a note.

**Question 13:** We haven't heard much about mobbing at USM lately. Do you think the situation has/will improve under [President Rodney] Bennett?

**Answer:** I hope so.

It is no secret that faculty [mobbing under the Saunders](#) administration reached [unprecedented levels](#). [Abuse of faculty](#) and staff seemed to become almost routine. As a result, the University of Southern Mississippi lost many fine faculty and wasted huge amounts of money.

With people at UWF reaching out to usmnews.net, I can't help but wonder if former USM President Saunders (now Provost at UWF) and former USM legal counsel (now University Counsel and/or Special Assistant to the President at UWF) [Gore](#) are up to their same tricks.

**Question 12:** Many of your articles are pretty hard hitting. Do you ever get any hate mail?

**Answer:** Normally, this is not the kind of question I would answer, but perhaps it is appropriate to let you know what kind of people surround us. The answer is, unfortunately, yes. The communications range from name calling to emails with content so obscene (pictures and language) that they shocked even this old Marine. Golf balls have been thrown through my windows. My tires have been flattened. My wife of more than 36 years has received letters

and emails urging her to leave me because I might hurt her. (Obviously, whoever wrote the letters doesn't know her.) Each of these communications has been anonymous -- written by disgusting, intolerant cowards.

**Question 11:** Since Dr. Bennett announced Dr. B's Book Club, I thought it might be interesting to see what you are reading this summer?

**Answer:** I have been reading *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* by Doris Kearns Goodwin. It is a book describing how a great man created an environment of inclusion and cooperation. Lesser men and women bully and threaten and punish those who disagree with them. Perhaps that intolerance is why USM has been and remains a fourth tier school.

**Question 10:** usmnews.net has been pretty critical of Joye Lee-McNelis' performance as head coach for the Lady Eagles. Do you know what her player turnover looks like?

**Answer:** The last time usmnews.net did an analysis of Ms. Lee-McNelis history of roster turnover, it didn't look good. Here is a [link to a report](#) which concludes "[i]n Lee-McNelis' case, with 6.8 new players per year, roster turnover for the USM Lady Eagles averages a problematic 52.3% per year over her first eight years."

**Question 9:** How do you think Dr. [Rodney] Bennett is doing as president?

**Answer:** I think it is too early to say. However, over the next several months we should start to see a picture. For example, given his lack of research background, how will he approach tenure issues? Will he offload Martha's airplane or continue to make payments the University can ill afford? How is he going to handle the situation with AD Hammond? In any event, usmnews.net will be here to report.

**Question 8:** Do you work during summers? If so, what kind of things do you work at?

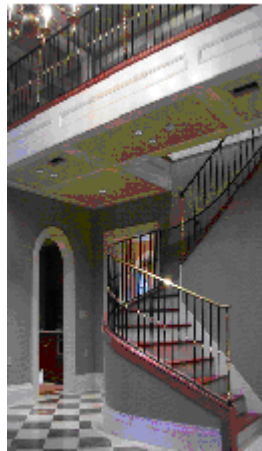
**Answer:** I do work over the summer. In addition to my usual writing and personal investment activities, I am involved in consulting with and advising small and medium-sized businesses. It's actually very interesting since I get to study a variety of issues. Health care (mostly cost containment) under "Obamacare" is a currently a very hot topic and is going to take a lot of my time. While many of the provisions don't go into effect until 2014, costs of insurance are already skyrocketing.



(PS: An iPad, an iPhone, and a MacAir let me stay in touch no matter where I am.)

**Question 7:** Just looking at your blog, it seems like you spend a lot of time out of Hattiesburg. Any plans to relocate?

**Answer:** No plans to relocate. We are frequently out of town on business. However, we always return to Hattiesburg. Here are a couple of quick snapshots of our house.



**Question 6:** Since you have been answering some personal questions, I have one. You sometimes mention going to the casinos in Biloxi. What games do you play?

**Answer:** By games, I assume you mean gambling. The answer is none. Here's a picture of my favorite risky activity at the casinos.



**Question 5:** Does Dr. Bennett really have no (as in zero) publications?

**Answer:** From what usmnews.net is hearing from campus, Dr. Bennett's academic qualifications are a matter of considerable concern -- far more than his limited administrative experience. As previously reported, Dr. Bennett's resume -- the one recently provided by USM's University Counsel -- does not report any published articles. His resume does include the following:

*Research for Publication:*

Barham, J. D. & Bennett, R. D. (2005) Understanding the Use of Value Statements in Student Affairs Practice. Data collection in progress.

A Google™ Scholar Search did not identify any published articles. If Dr. Bennett has published research, usmnews.net invites him to provide the information to the editor who will immediately report the publications.

**Question 4:** When do you plan to stop publishing usmnews.net?

**Answer:** The short answer to your question is, usmnews.net has no plans to stop publishing. USM just provides too much material of interest to our readers.

**Question 3:** What were you doing in Chicago (other than taking in shows)?

**Answer:** My wife has business in Chicago. While she was working, one of the things I did was to investigate possible contributions to the Opera and/or the Shakespeare Theater. Unfortunately, from a financial point of view, the new tax laws make charitable giving

far less attractive. The question is whether to contribute to something we love just because we love it. I'm still working on the answer.



**Question 2:** Have you heard from [incoming President] Dr. Bennett's about providing a copy of his cv yet?

**Answer:** No. Dr. Bennett did not respond at all to my letter requesting a copy of his cv. On March 18, one of the University Counsel indicated that Dr. Bennett "was to contact his office in Georgia for a copy of his cv. He was having his office locate the cv and then email it to us [University Counsel] so we should have a copy in the next day or so. We will email the cv to your attention upon receipt." Yesterday, we reminded University Counsel that we had not yet received a copy of the CV. His response was "[w]e will remind him [Dr. Bennett] about locating his cv and having it sent to USM."

**Question 1:** How long has usmnews.net been in business?

**Answer:** Seven years with nearly 12,000,000 hits from all around the world.