

Special Report

Bill Gunther, "Mr. Information"

An Investigative Series on the Use of the CoB for Personal Gain

The Director of the CoB's Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Bill Gunther, said the most amazing thing to Janis May, for May's presser entitled "Experts to Present at Southern Miss Economic Outlook Conference." That thing is as follows:

"Today, nothing is more important to area business and government leaders than access to information about the region's economy. The Bureau of Business and Economic Research is dedicated to providing these leaders, as well as residents of south Mississippi, timely information on the region, state and national economy."

The quote is amazing on a number of fronts. First, Gunther doesn't even live in the "state economy." He maintains a \$500,000 home in Josephine, AL, near the Gulf of Mexico. Second, by living 3 or more hours from Hattiesburg, Gunther's week consists of time-consuming drives that are facilitated by reduced teaching loads (for Gunther) that are made by EFIB Chair George Carter.



Bill Gunther

The phrase "to providing" really means "every now and again Gunther posts some Internet printouts to a Greene Hall bulletin board." How's that for "dedicated"? As for the "information" that Gunther posts, it comes from state, regional and national sources, not from the BBER. Is it "timely"? That depends on one's definition of the term. As far as "providing" goes, "business and government leaders, and residents of south Mississippi" have to venture to the third floor of Greene Hall to receive the "information." Of course, they rarely (if ever) do. The host of the info is a bulletin board outside of JGH's Suite 313, which will soon belong to Management and Marketing Chair, Tony Henthorne. On that day the bulletin board is also Henthorne's, so Gunther will have to find another source for his "dedicated" effort to provide "timely information" to Mississippi's "business and government leaders."

The press release is inserted below:

Experts to Present at Southern Miss Economic Outlook Conference

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Hattiesburg, Miss. - Economists will share their insights and predictions for 2008 at The University of Southern Mississippi's first Economic Outlook Conference, set for Jan. 10 at the university's Thad Cochran Center. The event will be hosted by the College of Business' Bureau of Business and Economic Research and sponsored by The First, a National Banking Association.

The conference will cover the 2008 economic forecast as well as provide updates on the post-Katrina recovery efforts along the Coast, said Dr. William Gunther, Southern Miss professor of economics and director of the BBER.

"Today, nothing is more important to area business and government leaders than access to information about the region's economy," said Gunther, who is scheduled to talk about the economic outlook for South Mississippi during the conference. "The Bureau of Business and Economic Research is dedicated to providing these leaders, as well as all residents of south Mississippi, timely information on the region, state and national economy."

Other conference speakers include Dr. Thomas J. Cunningham, vice president and associate director of research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, who will address the U.S. economic outlook; Dr. Darrin M. Webb, senior economist for the Center for Policy Research and Planning at the Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning, who will speak on the economic outlook for Mississippi and Dr. Ed Ranck, associate director of BBER, who will discuss economic recovery on the Gulf Coast post-Katrina.

Dr. Alvin Williams, interim dean of the College of Business, said the conference is a "must attend" event for business leaders, as it is designed to be a timely resource for both strategic and operational decision-making for businesses and government policy makers in the south Mississippi region and beyond.

Noted experts presenting at the conference will also 'decode and interpret' complex economic data from the perspective of managers in this area.

"Given the relative uncertainty of global, national and regional economic variables, it is essential to translate some of that uncertainty into meaningful and useful information," Williams said.

In addition to offering an annual forecast conference, the Bureau will soon be launching a new interactive Web site to provide complete economic data for all counties in Mississippi. Free and available for public use, the site will allow business leaders to easily create customized reports, including graphic trends analysis of local economic

indicators and analyses of local employment growth.

The January conference is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. and continue until 1:30. A \$35 conference registration fee includes lunch and a copy of The Economic Outlook for South Mississippi 2008.