

Special Report

More Bad News Facing CoB Faculty Search Committees An Investigative Series on Service Responsibilities in the CoB

As if CoB faculty search committees did not already face difficult tasks convincing job candidates to give USM serious consideration, it now appears that news from Hattiesburg-area K-12 educational institutions will only serve to make matters worse. In her 7-Sept-07 news story, "School levels drop," *The Hattiesburg American's* staff writer Nancy Kaffer explains that quality indicators have dropped significantly throughout the local education community. According to Kaffer, the drop in quality spans from the Hattiesburg Public School District to various parts of the Forrest County and Lamar County public school systems. Table 1 below summarizes the news presented in *The Hattiesburg American* story by Kaffer:

Table 1
Quality Deterioration of Various Hattiesburg-Area Schools

School	System	'05-'06 Quality Level	'06-'07 Quality Level
Baxterville Elementary	Lamar County Schools	4	3
Dixie	Forrest County Schools	5	3
Earl Travillion	Forrest County Schools	4	2
Forrest County Agric High	Forrest County Schools	5	4
Hattiesburg High	Hattiesburg Public Schools	3	2
Hawkins Elementary	Hattiesburg Public Schools	3	2
Lillie Burney Elementary	Hattiesburg Public Schools	5	4
Oak Grove Low Elementary	Lamar County Schools	5	4
Purvis Elementary	Lamar County Schools	5	4
Purvis High	Lamar County Schools	4	3
Purvis Middle	Lamar County Schools	4	3
Rawls Springs	Forrest County Schools	4	3
Rowan Elementary	Hattiesburg Public Schools	3	2
South Forrest	Forrest County Schools	5	4
Sumrall High	Lamar County Schools	5	4
Sumrall Middle	Lamar County Schools	5	4
Woodley Elementary	Hattiesburg Public Schools	3	2

Key: Level 5 = "Superior Performing"; Level 4 = "Exemplary"; Level 3 = "Successful"; Level 2 = "Under-Performing".

According to Kaffer's report, a school's quality level is based on student achievement, which is measured by students' scores on a statewide examination. As Kaffer reports, none of the Hattiesburg Public Schools increased in quality level, though, as Table 1 above shows, a number of them saw their quality index fall significantly. Among these is Hattiesburg High School, now a Level 2 ("under-performing") school. Hattiesburg High is joined by a number of the HPS District's elementary schools, such as Hawkins, Woodley, Earl Travillion, and Rowan.

As it appears from Table 1 above, the HPSD is in near shambles. Annie Wimbish, Superintendent of the HPSD, stated to Kaffer, "These levels are not good. They are

terrible, and we are not happy with them at all. . . It's totally unacceptable." Judging by other results in Table 1, Wimbish could have also been speaking on behalf of the Forrest County Schools system, which saw even larger drops in education quality levels.

Things are almost as bad now in the southern parts of Lamar County, where three of the Purvis schools dropped by one quality level, with two of them falling into the **danger** zone. Another, Baxterville Elementary, met with the same result as these latter two. The top two Sumrall schools also faced the news of a one-point drop in quality. Arguably the most significant of the results in Table 1 above, however, is the fall of Oak Grove Lower Elementary from Level 5 to Level 4. OGLE is thought by many locals to be the crown jewel in the Lamar County School system. Among new CoB faculty with children, most choose the Oak Grove schools (part of the Lamar County Schools system), making this drop-off quite startling. According to sources, if it (OGLE) proves to be a proverbial canary in the coal mine, then CoB (USM) hiring efforts will suffer a major blow from a future decline in an already lackluster set of education choices.

The question now is: what will members of the various CoB faculty search committees say to prospective new faculty? There is little doubt that the "we are not on AACSB 6th Year Review crowd" will call for the omission of any reference to the results shown above. Doing so will only continue to cloud the education-related decisions of new and prospective CoB faculty. So, the question remains an open one. To those looking for an answer – only time will tell.