Special Report

Was Morgan Hired to Dress Up the USM Centennial?

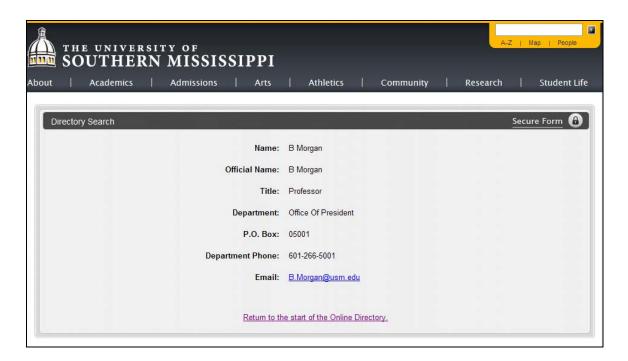
Details that Could Usher in the Next Campus Scandal

A late Jan-2011 installment of **The Farm** that points out that USM's Chester "Bo" Morgan holds the title of professor and university historian has sources asking whether Morgan (pictured below) was hired by USM in order to boost its yearlong 2010 centennial celebration. Morgan's <u>page on the CoAL website</u> notes that (1) his official title is ". . . University Historian," (2) he "shares an appointment with the Department of History and the University," (3) he was hired by USM in 2009, (4) he came to USM from Delta State University, and (5) his PhD is from Memphis State University.



Bo Morgan

Sources indicate that the five-item list above supports the belief that Morgan may have been hired by USM simply to provide a history of the university during the year-long centennial celebration. First, hiring faculty from Delta State who hold PhDs from Memphis is not likely a common practice within USM's history department. Second, Morgan's "2009" hiring means that he arrived just in time for the institution's 100th birthday. Third, being named "University Historian," and sharing his appointment with "the University," does anything but disabuse one of the notion that Morgan was directly hired by USM president Martha Saunders for the purpose of adding his book, Treasured Past, Golden Future: The Centennial History of The University of Southern Mississippi (University Press of Mississippi, 2010) to the 100th birthday celebration. Assuming that these pieces of the story are not enough to convince one of sources' ideas about this issue, consider the following insert, which is a copy of Morgan's entry in the USM Online Directory:



According to the directory, Morgan's home department is "Office Of President," making it seem as though he was hired by Saunders, and is perhaps Saunders' own personal (university) historian. By any account, this listing seems bizarre.

Also supporting sources' thoughts about Morgan's hiring is the fact that USM staffers were <u>blogging in reference</u> to Morgan's book (manuscript) back on 5-May-2008. On another occasion, this time on 8-April-2009, a blog mentioning the forthcoming book, using the phrase ". . . and the unveiling of the Centennial History Book Project," <u>was added to</u> USM's centennial webpages. Screens of these centennial blog entries are inserted below.





The evidence presented above easily supports sources' arguments about the hiring of Morgan. From here, one only has to accept the notion that Saunders would do such a thing as hiring a "university historian" to chronicle USM's history and to serve as a centerpiece during the USM centennial, as well as to teach a history course or two on the side. For that, sources point out that one need only to recall the 7-Dec-2010 news that Saunders hired Jennifer Payne as USM's new associate director for external affairs for the USM Alumni Association. As reported by USM, Payne came to that position after a three-year stint as USM's centennial celebrations director. Later reporting by USMNEWS.net showed that Payne's new position in the USMAA opened only after a curious, at best, shenanigan-ridden, at worst, bit of "restructuring" within USM's communications/public relations offices. That effort had Jim Coll moving into communications/PR from USMAA to make room for Payne at USMAA.

Clearly, there is potential that the information gathered here explains a troublesome, yet heretofore unreported, episode in USM's recent history. That such a problematic hiring might have occurred amidst a budget-cutting saga that now has CoAL faculty like Daniel Capper (religion) and Mark Clark (Greek and Latin) fighting to maintain their USM careers after having been terminated by Saunders, would only make this situation go from bad to worse. What do you think? Drop a line to USMNEWS.net and let us know.