

## *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 year-long 2010 centennial celebration. Morgan's [page on the CoAL website](#) 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 100<sup>th</sup> 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 100<sup>th</sup> 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:

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Directory Search Secure Form

Name: B Morgan  
 Official Name: B Morgan  
 Title: Professor  
 Department: Office Of President  
 P.O. Box: 05001  
 Department Phone: 601-266-5001  
 Email: [B.Morgan@usm.edu](mailto:B.Morgan@usm.edu)

[Return to the start of the 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 [blogging in reference](#) 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,” [was added to](#) USM’s centennial webpages. Screens of these centennial blog entries are inserted below.

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## CENTENNIAL BLOG

**Welcome to the Centennial Blog**  
 Posted on May 5, 2008 3:01 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

Welcome to the Southern Miss Centennial Celebration blog! We have created this page as a way to build excitement for our upcoming celebration and to keep you informed as our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary plans begin to take shape.

March 30, 2010 will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our legislative founding as an institution and we plan to celebrate this momentous milestone throughout the 2010 calendar year. Determining how to honor both our *treasured past* and our *golden future*, is a great charge and we are working hard to ensure that our celebration holds something for everyone.

We encourage you to set our website as one of your internet favorites and to check back frequently, as plans are developing every day!

**100 YEARS SOUTHERN MISS**

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## CENTENNIAL BLOG

### Countdown to the Centennial

Posted on April 8, 2009 12:16 PM | Permalink | Comments (0)

With only ten months until the start of our Centennial Celebration, things are really starting to pick up! Plans and preparations are being finalized and at last week's annual Founders' Day ceremony, President Dr. Martha Saunders revealed some of the programming and initiatives that will comprise our 100-year anniversary celebration. Among the announcements were the Centennial Kick-Off Concert featuring Renée Fleming, the start of the Centennial Endowed Scholarship Campaign, plans for a Centennial Concert and the unveiling of the Centennial History Book Project.

Clearly 2010 will be a remarkable year at Southern Miss! From performances by renowned artists to lectures featuring national leaders; we are positive that this once-in-a-lifetime programming will offer something for everyone. A current list of the 2010 Centennial Programming can be accessed on the Events page of our website.

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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.