

The Top 10 CoB Stories of 2010

By Duane Cobb

Each year at about this time I provide USMNEWS.net *my* top ten news items involving USM's business school for the year. This is Part 3 in that countdown for the top CoB stories of 2010.

3. Nail Friend, James Tisdale, Joins CoB – The news that CoB dean Lance Nail [hired friend](#), James Tisdale, to be the CoB's new director of external relations, of all things, was disheartening to many USM followers. The institution was, and still is, struggling with an economic crisis that has its fiscal situation in disarray. Since the beginning of Aug-2009, the Martha Saunders administration has delivered almost 50 pink slips to tenured and tenure-track faculty, yet the institution's administration continues to grow and be well paid. In this case, Tisdale – affectionately known by Nail and friends as “J.T.,” – joined the CoB administration at a cool \$90,000 per year, making some of the human resources cuts that had just been made look more likely meaningless acts. This facet of the story, [combined with the appearance of nepotism](#), made the episode the negative one that many in the USM family see it as today. The fact that [Tisdale was added](#) to the spring 2010 CoB teaching schedule only made the story a confirmation that nothing ever seems to change for the better when it comes to USM's b-school.

31st & Pearl

It Ain't Martyrdom

Operating on the premise that many USM faculty do not know how budget cut preparations are being made in colleges other than their own, if even then, it's time to shine some light on one of the practices that CoB administrators have employed in order to shelter *certain favored faculty* from termination. For example, many USM faculty are aware that the CoB's information systems program has been eliminated. As a result, two tenured associate professors – Kuo Lane Chen and James Magruder – have reportedly been informed that their USM employment will end after the 2010-11 academic year. In preparation for this program elimination, CoB dean Lance Nail moved IS chair Donna Davis into the accounting school so that she could do a bit more teaching as she transitions into retirement. Additionally, assistant and associate IS professors Barry Cumbie and Fujun Lai, respectively, were moved into management. Davis and Cumbie are Nail favorites, while Lai's research program is invaluable to the CoB's depleted AACSB portfolio. Other stories indicate that Davis even moved to “secure” the future employment of Dale Lunsford, a recent Davis hire for IS, before disbanding the unit.

Calling Cumbie and Lai “management professors” saved their jobs. It's too bad for Chen and Magruder that they did not get the same consideration. Similarly, former tourism management chair Cherylann Becker was moved into management months ago. One of the programs that may face some sort of consolidation during the FY 2013 budget cutting process is rumored to be TM. Thus, the preemptive move of Becker may likely one day save her own job in USM's b-school. If TM instructor Evelyn Green is moved into marketing or finance in the coming weeks, we'll know that TM is truly doomed. Of course, it's not likely surprising to long-time readers of USMNEWS.net that a good portion of those CoBers saved in this way are former administrators.

Is any of this inequitable behavior going on in other colleges? One would think so . . . it's practically “the USM way.” With another \$10 million in budget cuts expected in FY 2013, some believe this kind phenomenon will only grow in popularity. If so, it's not likely that those who will find themselves in shoes like those Chen and Magruder are now in will regret having but one faculty line to give for their university.

31st & Pearl is a series housed at usmnews.net that features commentary on aspects of life in the CoB from a variety of columnists.

2. MIS Eliminated, Chen Terminated – The Mississippi IHL [moved to eliminate the CoB's MIS program](#) in March-2010. That move went largely unnoticed, except

for a few reports here at USMNEWS.net. At the beginning of fall 2010, however, MIS was listed among a large group of eliminated or consolidated academic programs at USM, all a result of the \$15 million budget cut mandate handed down by the IHL. The [termination](#) of tenured associate professor of MIS, Kuo Lane Chen, accompanied the elimination of MIS. Speculation also has another tenured associate professor of MIS – James Magruder – joining Chen on the termination list. Some say the move by CoB dean Lance and USM president Martha Saunders to fire Chen represents a clear case of [an assault on tenure](#), using budget cuts as a pretext, like that being protested by AAUP-USM. The fact that Nail saved two other MIS faculty – Fujun Lai and Barry Cumbie – simply by moving them into management and international business in anticipation of cutting MIS out of the CoB (see *31st & Pearl* inserted above), made this troubling episode a nasty one as well. A third MISer – Dale Lunsford – was reportedly saved by his connection to MIS professor Donna Davis, whose retirement in 2010 made this very top 10 list. All of this 11th-hour type of scrambling by CoB administrators in order to save *certain* MIS faculty makes the “cherry-picking” [case against USM](#) that was accepted by an arbitrator-judge in reprimanding Florida State University in its own (recent) terminations of tenured faculty.

1. Good Night, and Good Bye to ECO – Even though the CoB’s [economics program was eliminated](#), and [its faculty terminated](#), back in the fall of 2009, [the story](#) surrounding [this move](#) continued to make big news into 2010. The Martha Saunders administration eventually reversed itself somewhat by accepting the economics faculty’s plan to save the four mostly junior professors (Akbar Marvasti, Sami Dakhli, Daniel Monchuk, and Deniz Gevrek) and the program, after moving it to the liberal arts college, if the five mostly senior faculty (William Gunther, George Carter, Trellis Green, Mark Klinedinst, and Edward Nissan) would go quietly (and, essentially, forcibly) into retirement. The whole plan began to fall apart, however, when [Gevrek resigned](#) from USM over the 2009-10 Christmas holidays. Later, in the spring of 2010, [Dakhli announced that he was leaving](#) USM for a job in France. [Marvasti followed suit](#) in June-2010, when he departed USM for a [non-academic position](#). Marvasti’s late resignation began [an avalanche](#) of course schedule problems for new CoAL-ECO chairman Allan McBride. The retreat of the USM economists was complete in August-2010, when [Monchuk absconded](#), according to sources *without informing USM officials*, leaving his fall 2010 teaching load uncovered. With Monchuk’s departure, ECO never really made it safely out of the CoB and into the CoAL. Describing the last few breaths of economics at USM was left up to graduating USM economics major Zach Mansell, who more-than-adequately did so [via an essay](#) in *The Student Printz*. It’s difficult to come up with a bigger story in USM’s b-school in *any* year than this particular one. Thus, it easily outpaces any other from 2010.