

“Tuitionation without Benefitation”

A Guest Editorial

Much has been said by the Martha Saunders administration about focusing USM’s diminishing state dollars on academic and other programs that are aimed at large numbers of students, not just smallish cliques. Susan Green-Lewis has [applied](#) Saunders’ thinking to USM [sports](#), identifying men’s and women’s basketball, track, and soccer as ideal candidates for [elimination](#). These programs seriously underperform, and very few students attend their contests. Surely, there are several [other](#) avenues for applying a Green-Lewis type of analysis. This editorial explores one of these.

It seems that one could apply Saunders’ logic to the relatively new CoB Honors House, which is a fraternity house-turned-academic dorm/classroom for so-called high-achieving CoB students. There are around 20 CoB students living in the CoB Honors House at any given time – a figure reportedly representing less than 1% of the CoB’s student body. Again, by its very definition the CoB Honors House serves a tiny minority of CoB students. Yet, the tuition and state dollars attached to the other 99% of CoB students goes to support, at least in part, the activities over at the CoB Honors House – activities that only a couple dozen CoB students benefit from. CoB professors often visit the CoB Honors House to teach courses and/or deliver academic lectures. Visiting scholars stop by on occasion to present research and other cutting-edge ideas to this 1% of the CoB student population. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, local and regional business leaders stop by from time to time to speak to the small group. These visits offer this 1% of the CoB student body priceless opportunities for networking with the business leaders of today, thus smoothing the path for these chosen few to become the business leaders of tomorrow. Meanwhile, the other 99% of CoB students usually never know these opportunities are being given to the privileged 1%. They, the 99%, take traditional courses, never see outside scholars, and miss out on the networking opportunities mentioned above. In the end, for many of the 99% there’s only a visit from Amy Yeend (the CoB’s employment services officer), leading to an entry level position with Cintas.

Clearly, the CoB Honors House represents “tuitionation without benefitation” for the 99% of CoB students that never darkens the door of the facility. Does that have to be the case? One wouldn’t think so, which is why I’m suggesting that non-Honors House CoB students do their own word-of-mouth advertising about the visiting scholars and business executives. They should head over to fraternity row on the evenings these visits occur, and avail themselves of the opportunity to learn from outside academicians and to network with local/regional business leaders. Speaking directly now, make Brian Lee, the CoB

professor of practice and Honors House director, and his boss, CoB dean Lance Nail, tell you “No!” when you show up on the CoBHH doorstep to partake in these valuable educational and networking opportunities. Have them turn you away from this “CoB classroom,” which is open only to 1% of your college, and accessible only by keycard.

Of course, it’s your prerogative to not be interested in these academic and/or networking opportunities. I’m simply pointing out that you are, in part at least, funding these opportunities for others (the smaller, 1%, of your group). Even in the “not interested” case, why isn’t it okay to stop by in the afternoon and use the CoB Honors House study areas in order to improve your grades? And just as USM’s commuter students often use the library to get in a quick nap in-between classes and before the long drive home, why can’t you stop by the Honors House commons area (CoB students) and get in some brief “shut eye” yourself? Lastly, don’t forget also that, when gastrointestinal emergencies creep up on you, the private facilities of the CoB Honors House are waiting over on fraternity row.

Those few readers who aren’t buying the “tuitionation without benefitation” idea are probably thinking that other universities provide similar living situations for high-achieving business (and other) students, and USM is no different, now, in that way. I would agree that other universities do this, and that USM ostensibly set up its own “CoB Honors House” program to mimic these other programs. Yet, we all know “the USM way.” And knowing “the USM way” like we do, how far away are we from having someone like the hypothetical son of dean Nail’s next door neighbor – a kid with a 2.274 GPA in accounting, and whose mother is a good friend of former School of Accountancy director James Crockett – getting his invitation to join 20 others in the CoB Honors House? I would suggest “not far,” and that is assuming that such a thing as the hypothetical above hasn’t already happened. Yes, this *is* “tuitionation without benefitation,” and the situation promises to get worse than that, as in the hypothetical above, over time. Isn’t it about time that you, part of the 99% CoB students, got your own keycard to that classroom, and all of its world-opening opportunities? You’ve certainly paid for it.