

Was Coll Moved to Make Room for Payne?

Some Curious Thanksgiving-Eve Restructuring in Communications Office

On Tuesday, 23-Nov-2010 – the day before Thanksgiving Holidays 2010 at USM – communications office manager **Beth Taylor** [issued a USM presser](#) entitled “Southern Miss Restructures Office of University Communications.” As part of this restructuring, **Jim Coll** (pictured below) was brought in as chief communications officer. Joining Coll on his “seven-person communication team” are (1) **Jana Bryant**, who “will guide . . . [USM’s] social media strategy,” (2) **Melanie Gardner**, who “will continue to manage . . . [USM’s] marketing efforts,” (3) **Geoff LoCicero**, who “will continue to lead . . . [USM’s] web services team,” (4) **Lynn McCarver**, who “will continue to direct . . . [USM’s] printing and creative services,” (5) Taylor, and (6) **Sheila White**, who “will continue to manage the communications needs of . . . [USM-Gulf Coast].” According to Taylor, “Coll is charged with providing the overall leadership and management of the marketing and public relations functions of the university, including public information, advertising campaigns, interaction with members of the media, and branding.”



Jim Coll



Jennifer Payne

In addition to being “a double graduate” of USM, the most interesting aspect of Taylor’s story is that Coll comes to the communications office from USM’s alumni affairs office, where he served as *associate director for external affairs*. This is interesting given **David Tisdale’s** [follow-up presser](#) on 7-Dec-2010 entitled “Payne Named Associate Director for External Affairs for Alumni Association.” As USMNEWS.net [reported recently](#), **Jennifer Payne** came to her new position as ADEA in alumni affairs from a *three-year stint* as USM’s Centennial Celebration Coordinator. That report provides sources’ speculation that Payne is quite likely being paid \$90,000 to \$100,000 in the ADEA position, representing a move that is [especially problematic](#) given the USM [administration’s penchant for running roughshod](#) through the institution’s budget, even during [these turbulent fiscal times](#). Sources now tell USMNEWS.net that this particular story looks to be one wherein Coll was moved from ADEA in alumni affairs and into the USM communications office for the simple purpose of finding a way for USM to retain Payne, and that any future revelation that Payne is related to the Payne family of USM financial backers only means that this story goes from bad to worse. Even absent such a revelation, the details provided here easily call into question, at least according to sources, USM president **Martha Saunders’** [claim](#) that these moves are saving money.