

What is a metaphor and what does it tell us?

Why, Ed, didn't you ask for translation?

In a recent *Hattiesburg American* article entitled "[Bennett's first year at USM a busy one](#)," reporter Ed Kemp forgets to ask, "What do you mean?" Keep in mind that metaphor is a poor, sometimes ridiculous means of communication. Too often metaphor conceals what's actually going on.

Rodney Bennett says he's had to bring the surgeon's clamp to his first year as president of the University of Southern Mississippi.

And very soon, to extend the metaphor, he'll reach for the scalpel.

"I think this was a year when we just had to stop the bleeding," he said. "We haven't done the surgery yet."

What kind of scalpel is Bennett talking about? Whose blood will be spilled? Who's getting cut? We all know it isn't the "monumental" and "magnificent" [construction](#) that is springing up across campus, built with borrowed money. The last we heard, Bennett is still enjoying the benefits of a private plane funded with taxpayer and student money.

What is Bennett talking about? If he leaves us to guess, he may be following in Martha Saunders' footsteps handing pink slips to scores of faculty. But the truth is, given his vague, meaningless words, we can only guess. Whatever he is talking about, it's not transparent. In fact, he's about as opaque as mud.

Wait, there's a difference of opinion here.

"I think what you're seeing in general is Dr. Bennett's abilities to lead, set goals and be transparent," [Desmond] Fletcher [faculty senate president], said. "We have not seen a lot of that in the past."

Oops, Mr. Kemp missed another opportunity to ask Mr. Fletcher what he means by transparency and examples of Dr. Bennett's transparency. It certainly is not using one metaphor after another.