

Who's Next?

A Guest Editorial by Victoria Tyler

A number of tenured faculty in USM's College of Arts & Letters must have spent the weekend wondering if they are the targets of dean Denise von Herrmann's \$2 million budget cut. This cut, outlined in *The Hattiesburg American* and *The Clarion Ledger* late last week, included almost \$450,000 in savings that resulted from the elimination of seven faculty lines in the COAL, some of which are occupied by tenured faculty. Surely there are 14 or 15 COAL faculty who spent the weekend believing they are each one of the seven who can expect terminal contract notification on September 1, 2009. That date, which falls on Tuesday, gives yet another meaning to the phrase "Black Tuesday" for members of the COB and USM families.

In thinking about the upcoming "Black Tuesday," and all that will be said by various USM officials between now and then, I can't help but fear that the 2002-07 loss of so many great orators from the USM faculty ranks will only make things more difficult as USM faculty and staff face the central administration over proposed cuts. Though the upcoming political battle would be difficult under any circumstances, having spokespersons like Gary Stringer, Frank Glamser, Noel Polk, and Ann Wallace around would have been a tremendous benefit to faculty like those seven targeted by von Herrmann. Not only *isn't* the COB's senior Faculty Senate representative, Mark Klinedinst, capable of speaking in favor of these seven (or any others) in an articulate manner, he *can't* even be counted on to attend the meetings so that his constituents can learn the latest news about the situation.

Recent speculation has it that the COB's tourism management, fashion merchandising and economics faculty are on the block. FM seems too small to be a legitimate target. After all, Nail needs to find \$2 million, and this department offers only three faculty, and their salaries are low relative to other areas of the CoB. As for TM, perhaps it's true that this unit is too big and spread out. A consolidation down on the Coast seems plausible, but an elimination doesn't seem so reasonable given the importance of casino gaming on the Mississippi Coast. Elimination of TM completely might make national headlines, given the unique situation. That leaves ECO, the unit that time and again works to undermine the Nail administration of the CoB, an effort that jeopardizes the

progress, if not the *existence*, of the whole business college. What's there? About 10 majors if reports are accurate, and a mountain of nepotism if you've spent any time in or around USM's COB. The first three deans of the college were economists, and its most powerful and *notorious* associate dean, Farhang Niroomand, was also an economist. Pushing ECO out on the plank seems like the proverbial "no brainer." Perhaps it's fitting that Klinedinst is ECO's spokesman at this critical juncture in the unit's history.