

# 31<sup>st</sup> & Pearl

## Filling Lyman's Shoes

As expected, Ed Kemp's 20-Jan-2011 [news story](#) about the appeals of program cuts has everyone talking about USM provost Robert Lyman. It's simple, really. Lyman's remark about the transparency created by release of the appeals committee's report, which will be helpful to the USM community in gauging president Martha Saunders' response to those same appeals hearings, has many thinking that he is distancing himself from Saunders' ultimate decision(s). Not only that, the remarks also have some believing that Lyman is "a short-timer," or someone who will be vacating the provost's seat in the coming weeks and months. Better still, as USMNEWS.net [reported last week](#), some in the USM community were struck by Lyman's secondary remarks, which seem to suggest that he views Saunders' decision-making process as a roulette wheel of sorts, providing further support for the beliefs of those who say he's packing. Who can blame a provost for not wanting to answer to a roulette wheel, particularly when he or she is seemingly being shut out of a process -- i.e., one regarding elimination of academic programs and termination of tenure/tenure-track faculty -- that is about nothing if not *academic affairs*.

With thoughts and musings now well on their way, perhaps it's time to speculate about Lyman's replacement, should he step away from the dome. As far as a replacement from a "national" pool, assuming such a search is conducted in these rough economic times, naming a replacement would be much to ask of anyone. From the internal pool, however, such speculation is a bit less complicated. As far as this 31<sup>st</sup> & Pearl columnist goes, that choice seems fairly clear -- Michael Forster, the current dean of the College of Health (CoH). As Victoria Tyler's USMNEWS.net [column](#) points out, Forster appears to have been carrying water for Saunders for some time now. That assistance continues, right up to Kemp's 23-Jan-2011 [report on dwindling federal earmarks](#) for universities like USM. Forster agrees that earmarks can be bad, so long as we're *not* talking about the \$6 million that his boss, Saunders, needs to get a \$27 million nursing building off the ground at USM. Judging from his recent "body of work," Forster may be the perfect provost, at least as far as *Saunders* is concerned.

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31st & Pearl is a series housed at [usmnews.net](#) that features commentary on aspects of life in the CoB, and at USM, from a variety of columnists.