

31st & Pearl

Just Plain Tired

USM president Martha Saunders hasn't blogged in a month. The USM faculty senate is dormant for the summer. One has to wonder what is going on over at the Hattiesburg campus. What we do know is that the University Priorities Committee is considering how to handle a \$15 million cut in the institution's budget. We also know that CoAL dean Denise von Herrmann is reeling from what appears to be her ill-advised decision to cut Frederick Barthelme and Rie Fortenberry from the USM Center for Writers. Finally, it was only recently that USM's *athletics* department got a *nice budget increase* for the coming year. So, very little of the goings on over at USM seems to make much sense.

The institution is currently rated in the lowest national tier by *U.S. News & World Report*. That serial's 2011 rankings are due in about three weeks. Odds are that the school remains in Tier 4 (the bottom tier). And with all of the national buzz about the debacle involving the USM Center for Writers, even if the university rises to Tier 3 for 2011, it will most likely fall back into Tier 4 *yet again* in August of 2011, when the 2012 ratings are out. Over in the CoB, the 2012 AACSB re-accreditation work is about to be placed on the front burner. We're just five months from 2011, when all the AACSB heavy lifting is needed. That lifting is usually done by old-timers in the CoB, of which there are very few remaining these days. This would have been a job for the likes of Stephen Bushardt, George Carter, Donna Davis, Alvin Williams, Michael Vest, and Farhang Niroomand. However, they have moved on to other universities or into retirement since the last AACSB attempt in 2007. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that the old-timers now lie mainly in accounting, with the likes of Roderick Posey, Stanley Clark, Gwen Pate, and Charles Jordan. These faculty will probably bear a disproportionate share of the burden of putting together the 2011-12 self-study. And, that's in addition to doing *all* of the separate accounting re-accreditation work.

With all of these problems, it's no surprise that Saunders is absent and the faculty senate is dormant. This time last year the faculty senate was holding emergency meetings, while Saunders was busy putting out budget cuts fires. The "crisis fatigue" that now permeates the campus is quite palpable. The concern these days is that this fatigue will allow a number of new ill-advised ideas and plans to rise to the top.

31st & Pearl is a series housed at usmnews.net that features commentary on aspects of life in the CoB from a variety of columnists.