

31st & Pearl

Miles 2.0

With all of the talk about budget cuts anywhere from \$10 million to \$25 million over 2011 and 2012, one would think that plans other than Daniel Miles' proposal to reallocate the current USM athletics "tuition tax" to academic affairs would be circulating among the faculty, staff, and students. For example, wouldn't elimination of USM's Greek system be a money-saving step? The university not only owns and maintains the grounds this system is built on, it also maintains ownership of the fraternity houses themselves. Elimination of this system would free the Martha Saunders administration of some fiscal ties, while also freeing valuable geography for new brick-and-mortar projects.

Of course, if faced with such a plan, one would expect Saunders, her new CFO Russ Willis, and others to argue that the Greek system is vital to recruiting students and maintaining an enrollment count that exceeds 15,000 students. How, though, do all of the campus beatings and alcohol poisonings via Greek hazing fit into that equation? Both *The Hattiesburg American* and *The Student Printz* have, in mid-January of 2011, [updated us](#) on the [assault cases pending](#) against (1) Chase LaGarde, and (2) Steven Quaintance and Andrew Asaro, all members of USM's Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity. LaGarde stands accused of a 4-Dec-2010 assault of Stuart Ramsey, while Quaintance and Asaro are headed to Forrest County Justice Court on 19-Jan-2011 for allegedly assaulting Zachary Ridge. Both Ramsey and Ridge are USM students.

These stories formed part of the pattern of bad behavior cited by USM vice president for student affairs Joe Paul upon removal of Sigma Phi Epsilon from USM's campus, at least for a while. The SPE-related messes above follow the hazing-alcohol poisoning [episode](#) involving Kappa Sigma fraternity in Sept-2008. That incident left at least one USM student in intensive care for septic shock and an enlarged liver. Like the most recent episode, that one from 2008 also resulted in a USM fraternity, Kappa Sigma, losing its local charter. It is this particular fraternity's former Greek row [house that now services](#) the CoB's Honors House. At this rate, all of USM's academic colleges may soon have a home for elite students over on Greek row.

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