

31st & Pearl

The Ghosts of Christmas Present

If you've been keeping track of all of the nonsense occurring almost daily at USM, you probably can't help but think that the campus is caught in the grip of some type of *inaction specter*. Take, for example, Daniel Miles' [neat proposal](#) to shift one-half of each student's tuition-tax payment to support USM athletics into academic affairs. Over the course of the year, this will shift about \$3 million from sports to education. As expected, support for this proposal seemed to grow quickly after its details were made public by *The Student Printz*. What has happened since? Well, USM athletics director Richard Giannini got wind of the proposal and made public his view that his department would suffer from losing \$3 million of its \$19 million annual budget. What has been Miles' response? Sensing that USM sports might be hurt, Miles has [all but completely rescinded](#) his budget proposal.

If you've been watching the chaos that exists almost daily on the USM campus, you also can't help but realize that some sort of *obtuseness specter* has the campus in a trance. Take, for example, USM political science professor Kate Greene's [cogent essay](#) explaining that [chalking campus](#) bricks and cement cannot really be considered "vandalism." Nothing was, after all, damaged. Still, the [USM PoPo](#), USM administrators (e.g., vice president for student affairs [Joe Paul](#), College of Health dean [Michael Forster](#)), and USM students (e.g., SGA president [Kasey Mitchell](#) and [Zachary Knight](#)) insist on calling the [chalking episode](#) "vandalism." This extended even into the 5-Nov-2010 USM faculty senate meeting, wherein one passionate, and deep-thinking faculty senator expressed the view that the Saunders administration is backing a *disproportionate* (legal) response to the chalking incident, likely because it is over-sensitive to criticism of the USM president. The senator in question even put forward a motion urging that the USM faculty senate to submit a letter to *The Student Printz* acknowledging the aforementioned disproportionate response. His motion was, however, met with dead silence, as not a single other faculty senator "seconded" the motion.

The USM campus is also haunted by the *silence specter* (USM faculty refuse to bring up the [airplane lease](#) in the presence of USM's central administrators), the *clumsiness specter* (AAUP-USM is [struggling](#) to mount a defense of tenure at USM), the *sycophancy specter* (Forster [serving](#) as Saunders' "yes man"), and so many others. This really is a "Who ya gonna call?" moment for the USM family – the kind that reveals what sort of character that the collective group possesses. With more fiscal problems, and perhaps more chaos, down the road ahead, turning the page to the next chapter in this saga is not something many are looking forward to now.

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