

31st & Pearl

Unified But Unequal

The two branches of the University of Southern Mississippi have never been equal. For years the Hattiesburg faculty have been noticeably more engaged in academic research. During that time many of them would refer to the Long Beach branch as a country club, where faculty wore casual clothes and absconded from the premises at any and every opportunity. This difference was noticeable both when the two branches were seen as *separate* organizations, and when the branches were *unified*.



Along with the post-Katrina rebuilding that is taking place at the beautiful campus next to the Gulf (literally), a transformation of sorts seems to be occurring. USM has now had two bad presidents in a row, and with all that bad presidents bring (e.g., bad deans), the atmosphere on the Hattiesburg campus has reached a toxicity level that may even be measurable by scientific instruments. Down in Long Beach, campus construction and beautification is ongoing, and faculty there now await the arrival of Frances Lucas, the current president of Millsaps College who was recently chosen to serve as that branch's administrative leader. Yes, there is a sort of renaissance happening at USM-GC that may, under Lucas' leadership, lead to a flip-flop in which campus that Mississippians consider to be the parent organization. The unification may be complete, but the inequality still exists. Soon, however, it may be USM-GC that is on 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.