

31st & Pearl

Be Careful, Eagles

After a lengthy hiatus, www.usmlite.com appears to be back on the air. That's a very good thing for those of us who enjoy the daily updates there, especially the humorous audio clips (virtual fireside chats). According to the 28-Feb-2011 audio clip, the website has been under attack from hackers. Of course, the website is based on satire. Still, there are kernels of reality there. I'm guessing that the hacking story is one such kernel. That guess is consistent with stories coming out of USM about the Martha Saunders administration spying on faculty and staff e-mails. My thought is that Saunders may employ one or more persons for that very purpose, and that this person (these people) was (were) tasked with finding out more about usmlite, and by any means necessary.

To believe Saunders might spy on faculty and staff in the way described above, one need only believe that she is a bit like her predecessor, former USM president Shelby Thames. If one considers that Saunders has a plane, the *she*, not Thames, fired former USM head football coach Jeff Bower, and that she seems to be playing favorites *and* growing the USM administration, as in what is going on with Russ Willis these days, believing Saunders to be like Thames is not much of a stretch. Thames went in on a plane with some private citizens. Saunders got her own, courtesy of taxpayers. Thames *wanted to fire* Bower. Saunders *did* it. Thames played favorites, though he arguably reduced the size of administration. Willis seemingly gets a raise, and a promotion, every month, while ousted VPs are given new, lower positions at the same pay rate (e.g., former CFO Joe Morgan).

Thames actually found a heart after Hurricane Katrina devastated USM. No one lost their job in the aftermath. Saunders, on the other hand, has delivered almost 50 terminal letters to tenured and tenure-track faculty, all to hang on to her precious airplane. One could argue that Saunders is more like Thames than Thames is, and that for her to order the monitoring of faculty e-mails is as easy for her as calling the USM pilots to come fetch her from Dallas or Louisville.

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.