

31st & Pearl

Dude, Where's My Meal Card?

If you're one of the nearly 100 new faculty at USM and you've [read reports](#) of Chester "Bo" Morgan's visiting professorship deal with former USM president Martha Saunders, then you're probably wondering where you need to go to collect your Southern Miss Catering meal card for the 2012-13 academic year. Morgan did indeed get at least \$2,000 worth of meals, to go along with housing and travel expenses, not to mention a salary, all for authoring *Treasured Past, Golden Future*, USM's centennial history. This book came hot off the University Press of Mississippi just in time for USM's 100th birthday party in 2010 – the party that lasted all year long, and was the centerpiece of Saunders' 2007-12 presidency – although it arrived at a cost of at least (another) \$40,000.

Morgan is a special faculty member. Who else on the USM faculty has their fiscal line housed in the president's office? Apparently, that position comes with food, shelter, and perhaps even clothing. Any other USM faculty who attempts to turn in grocery receipts or mortgage statements to USM financial officials for reimbursement is, of course, in for a rude awakening. All of Morgan's job in writing the history book during the 2008-09 academic year was to make Saunders look good. For that, money is no object, as readers of USMNEWS.net now understand thanks to countless reports and editorials concerning Saunders' spending habits. In addition to all of the goodies bestowed upon Morgan by Saunders, he now has a permanent position among the USM faculty. Not a bad deal, if you can get it.

At last report, the cost of *Treasured Past, Golden Future* stood somewhere between \$95,000 and \$145,000. Knowing what we know about Saunders, much more is likely coming our way. How did desire to have a puffy history of USM published just in time for the institution's centennial come to all of this? Beyond all that, how did Morgan's visiting gig, with all of its accompanying benefits, morph into a permanent slot on the USM faculty, and from the president's office in the *USM Budget Book*? These are questions that need answering.

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.