

A Crack in the Foundation?

USM Associate Provost William Powell Separates Himself from the Rest

As *The Hattiesburg American's* higher education reporter Ed Kemp makes clear in his 14-Sept-2010 [news story](#) about the budget cuts, USM associate provost William Powell appears to be distancing himself from the [finger pointing](#) being done by his boss, USM provost Robert Lyman, and [that](#) of Lyman's boss, USM president Martha Saunders. Both of USM's top academic leaders have been attempting to lay the blame for terminating 29 tenured and tenure-track faculty on the University Priorities Committee, an advisory body made up largely of USM faculty. Sources say that Powell's deviation likely stems from his dual role in the current crisis – Powell, pictured below, is also a chair of the UPC.



Powell

In parting ways philosophically from Saunders and Lyman, Powell told Kemp that to say that the 111 academic programs were recommended by the UPC for cuts is to mischaracterize the UPC process, which he also told Kemp was about determining funding priority for programs. As Powell put it, the programs tiered by the UPC did not represent recommendations for budget cuts. Now, after meeting the business end of a public relations ploy from Saunders, Powell perhaps better understands the plight of USM faculty. Though time may further deepen the crack in the administration foundation, sources say that the USM family should not hold its collective breath waiting for that to occur.