

## ***A Walk Through the History of Southern Miss***

### **Part 4**

usmnews.net continues a new series revisiting nationally embarrassing events in the history of Southern Miss. This morning we continue with [U. of Southern Mississippi Plans to Cut Programs and 29 Faculty Jobs](#).



[Martha Saunders and Joe Bailey](#) hurried out of state – to the USM vs. South Carolina football game on 2-Sept-2010 – after announcing faculty cuts to the general public on 30-Aug-2010, and dealing with them a bit more on 31-Aug-2010. The picture says it all.

August 31, 2010

### **[U. of Southern Mississippi Plans to Cut Programs and 29 Faculty Jobs](#)**

By Audrey Williams June

With classes barely under way at the University of Southern Mississippi, officials at the institution are already preparing for a steep budget reduction for next year. They have notified 29 faculty members, about half of them tenured, that their jobs are on the line.

The job cuts are part of a proposal the university announced on Monday that would pare \$15-million from its budget for the 2011-12 academic year. Among other things, the proposal calls for closing nearly two dozen academic programs.

The provost at Southern Mississippi, Robert Lyman, said in an interview on Tuesday that the institution had decided on the proposed cuts with a goal of "trying to preserve enrollment and services to students while trying to impact the smallest number of faculty."

The university had few other options, he said. "We've really entered an era in this country where there are severe constraints on public higher education."

All eight public universities in Mississippi have been asked by state higher-education officials to come up with plans to offset anticipated budget shortfalls next year, and Southern Mississippi is the first to make its proposal public.

The state coordinating board for higher education must approve the plan, and the programs targeted for elimination can appeal, but Mr. Lyman said the faculty members whose jobs would be eliminated were being notified now because state and institutional guidelines require that the university give a year's notice to tenured and tenure-track professors who are facing termination.

About 750 full-time faculty members work at the university.

"We've known for some time that we would be facing another deficit," said Anita Davis, who is president of the university's Faculty Senate and an associate professor of music education. "Personally, I don't ever want to see us in this position again. If there's any solace in this, it's that there are so many institutions across the country dealing with the recession in similar ways."

The 29 faculty members slated for termination would complete the current academic year. They are attached to the programs the university plans to eliminate—a mix of bachelor's and master's programs in fields that include recreation administration, German, Latin, and allied health. A complete list is available on the university's [Web site](#).

The university's main campus, in Hattiesburg, with about 13,000 students, is slated to bear the brunt of the proposed cuts. Its College of Arts and Letters would lose 10 faculty members, the most of any of the institution's five colleges,

to save the university \$917,833. The university's Gulf Coast campus is scheduled to lose two programs and six professors. In addition, four programs that operate on both campuses would be consolidated.

Mr. Lyman said the program cuts were concentrated at Hattiesburg because the Gulf Coast operations are more research-oriented and "they have separate funding streams because of that."

In addition to cutting costs in academics, the university is also trimming academic and administrative support budgets, and will look for additional savings through campuswide initiatives such as early-retirement incentives and furloughs. The proposed faculty and program cuts add up to projected savings of about \$3.8-million, while budget reductions on the academic and administrative support side total about \$3.6-million. The campuswide initiatives, which aren't quite a done deal, are expected to save about \$7.5-million.

"I think it's almost certain that we will implement the retirement incentive. I think that's something that we will probably announce in the coming months," Mr. Lyman said. "The issue of furloughs, though, is a much more complex one, particularly when it comes to faculty."

The university will make a decision on furloughs once it has a firm number on how much its state appropriations will drop next year and can gauge how much of that an increase in tuition will offset, he said.

At least one program has successfully appealed elimination in the past. Last year, the economics major at Southern Miss was on the chopping block, but professors managed to [preserve the major](#) in a last-minute deal.

Appeals can succeed, Mr. Lyman said, when the program can "show alternative ways of achieving the same budget reduction with the same or lesser impact on faculty members."

My response in the comment section at the time:

12080243 - September 01, 2010 at 10:10 am

The following information was obtained from the University of Southern Mississippi by way of a Mississippi Open Records request. The University provided data about flights (dates, destinations, and passengers) and actual cash outflows related to an airplane (N777AQ) leased by President Martha Saunders during a recession with taxpayer and student dollars.

To date, the plane has been in service at USM for 17 months. Please bear in mind that the costs we report do not include any portion of the 60th payment to include a final balloon payment of \$907,053.85. If this \$900,000+ payment were allocated, the amounts here would be substantially greater.

USM identified 30 round trips during the 17 months which results in an actual cost of \$19,707.72 per round trip flight of N777AQ (\$591,231.71 total actual cost/30 trips--note that about half of the 30 trips are within the state of Mississippi). Another way to calculate the actual cost is to note that USM identified 114 passengers (some the same people on different flights, like President Saunders) over the 17 month period. The cost per passenger round trip flight would be \$5,186.24 (\$591,231.71 total actual cost/114 actual number of passengers).

Administrative cost cutting claptrap aside, this is a reality of President Saunders' behavior. Additional reports can be found on [www.usmnews.net](http://www.usmnews.net).

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