

ANSWERING A READER'S QUESTION

Today, I'd like to take a day off of our series, "MS Open Records Request Reveals USM's Actual Costs of President Saunders' Plane", and answer a question to the editor which we reported a few days ago. The question was contained in the following letter to the editor:

Dear usmnews.net:

I read with great interest the piece in Sunday's Hattiesburg American (pages 2C and 3C) concerning Dr. Marc DePree's ethics publications in the accounting literature. Given this and all the documented information on his website, why are more people not concerned about the unusual dealings at Southern Miss under president Martha Saunders? A lot of readers would like an update of Professor DePree's status with his litigation against the University. We can now see why this was necessary.

[name withheld by request]

The litigation, *DePree v. Saunders, et al*, arose from the insistence of Martha Saunders, Alvin Williams, Rod Posey, Charles Jordan, Patty Munn and a few others that I be silent. I had tried to convince them privately to reconsider their habits of petty corruption and misconduct. They responded by accusing me of everything from racism, harassment, being a danger, and not being research active. I'm sure I've left out a few accusations. The point is, after Dr. Saunders fully committed herself supporting the accusations, she learned there was no evidence for any of them. Again, she failed to do the least bit of investigation. She simply and heedlessly jumped in and took up the cause of several dishonest administrators and faculty. She hired two law firms, Adams & Reese and Mayo & Mallette, in addition to University counsel Lee Gore and lawyers from the IHL. Let's not forget a small army of expert witnesses, either. Dr. Saunders spent millions of dollars—that is, millions of taxpayer and student money—to silence a professor who was legitimately exercising First Amendment rights. The petty corruption and misconduct has since been fully documented on usmnews.net and been the subject of case studies peer reviewed and published.

The major item we fought over was my speech. Saunders, *et al*, most wanted my silence and they wanted this website shut down. Obviously, Saunders, *et al* didn't get it. I am still a tenured full professor. My continuing employment is not subject to any discipline arising from the accusations some faculty and administrators made against me. The past three years without assignment to teach, provide service, or research, and the next three years without assignment to teach, provide service, or research ending June 2013, I was and will continue to be paid full salary and benefits (approximately \$750,000). My agreed resignation date of June 2013 completes a full 30 years of employment at USM and 30 years in the state retirement system.

Incidentally, two expert forensic psychiatrists were concerned about my returning to campus because I was at risk from a couple of my accounting colleagues. The concern was not that I might be a danger to them, but they were a danger to me. The University refused to permit these experts to interview the accounting faculty to determine how serious the risk to me. However, even after the litigation settled, I have been stalked and harassed by one of the accounting faculty, to the extent that I contacted EEOC. Ms. Woodrick intervened to instruct the professor in question to cease stalking me. Dr. Saunders didn't care about any of that. However, if you are on the USM campus, you may be in the presence of one of these potentially dangerous faculty and not know what may trigger their anger.

One more personal and pleasant note. We recently received notice that three USM students were selected as this year's recipients of the Jude DePree Endowed Scholarships. We wish them the best of luck at USM and in their careers. Scholarships my wife and I earned as students helped us work our way out of poverty and to a better life.

Marc DePree