

From the Archives of Academic Administrative Yackety-Yak, Blather, Prattle, Jabber, and—for the Sophisticate Among You— Confabulation Part 5

Part 5 of our series that highlights academic administrative blather continues with USM President Martha Saunders’ “**Innovation (Creative, Bold, Determined).**” (To catch up, see [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), and [Part 4](#).)

In Part 4, we ended with the hint of a particularly disgusting habit of public relations practitioners: rewriting history.

University of Southern Mississippi *Our story*

Our story began nearly a century ago as Mississippi’s first state-supported teacher training school. Even in its infancy, Southern Miss recognized and celebrated the power of people and the potential for opening doors to a better life.

Ms. Saunders’ and Ms. Amodeo’s knowledge of USM history is appalling. Especially given an Institutions of Higher Learning bragging point when naming Martha Saunders USM’s president: she was one of our own, a USM graduate. Maybe that signals an intentional lapse of memory. If she chose to ignore USM history, she did in fact sanitize USM’s history, then burnish an idealized version of it beyond any notion of integrity.

Saunders should know USM’s history, *our story*, has not historically “*recognized and celebrated the power of people and the potential for opening doors to a better life.*” Even in its recent past -- in the lifetime of Aubrey Lucas’ administrative duties at USM -- USM not only slammed doors shut in the faces of deserving student applicants, it severely punished them—no different from the punishment meted out in antebellum Mississippi to disobedient slaves.

For example, [during the late 1950s](#), Aubrey K. Lucas was the Director of Admissions at Mississippi Southern College, later named the University of Southern Mississippi, when Mr. Clyde Kennard applied for admission. Among other accomplishments, [Mr. Kennard](#) was “a former sergeant and paratrooper in the U.S. Army.” Mr. Kennard’s clearly met all conditions for acceptance, except for one insignificant thing: he was black.

Mr. Kennard wasn’t just rejected, he was punished for his efforts to become the first black to be admitted to MSC-USM. He was falsely accused of a crime, prosecuted, and jailed.

Mr. Lucas blamed “the governor, J. P. Coleman, who decided against admitting Mr. Kennard.” Although Mr. Lucas said, in 2006 – long after Mr. Kennard’s death -- “[it was a mistake](#),” he did not, as Director of Admissions, stick his neck out to prevent the injustice. Let there be no mistake that the behavior of Mississippi officials was disgusting and despicable. Their behavior was so disgusting that no one, much less one who professes to be a devout Christian, could have

perceived what was done to Mr. Kennard was anything other than an appalling injustice.

Mr. Lucas did then what he continued to do over many years. He sat back and watched injustice be perpetrated against others by USM officials including Presidents Thames and Saunders.

Let's continue with more words from Saunders' *Innovations* with a more accurate recounting of history in mind. How do her words feel, now?:

People connected with Southern Miss have found a way to merge the concepts of self and community. As a matter of fact, they walk the line between the two so beautifully that it is nearly impossible to advance one without the other. Perhaps this "collective individualism" stems from deep-rooted values and beliefs. After all, Southern Miss is steeped in tradition and represents the best of what it means to be "Southern."

In Part 6, we continue with Saunders' nonsensical blather, which includes projections of a future USM. Let's not forget that Saunders hired Mona Amodeo's idgroup to help her develop *Innovations* and other public relations blather at a cost to students and taxpayers of hundreds of thousands of dollars.