

Ain't No Sunshine

HATTIESBURG – USMNEWS.net has received tips in recent weeks indicating that the USM faculty senate was planning to retreat into the proverbial darkness out of concern that its shortcomings were being covered by local media. Those tips seem to be confirmed with the release of the 2-Mar-2012 [meeting minutes](#), which contained the faculty senate president's report (from Tim Rehner) below:

4.0 Officer Reports

4.1 President

President Rehner discussed his concern with the open nature of Faculty Senate meetings and particularly easy access to information about FS deliberations at meetings before minutes have been written and approved. The FS executive committee members discussed in their February 24th meeting the need for a recording of meetings for the purpose of accuracy in our minutes. Additional discussion with FS was opened to address concerns especially availability of recorded minutes to senators upon request. Perhaps the minutes really should not be posted to the general public in any format before FS has approved the minutes. Proposal to limit access to FS minutes until they are approved by Faculty Senate was unanimously approved.

As the minutes point out, "President Rehner discussed his concern with the open nature of Faculty Senate meetings and particularly easy access to information about FS deliberations at meetings . . ." Sources tell USMNEWS.net that it is somewhat disturbing that a faculty senate president would be concerned about ". . . the open nature of Faculty Senate meetings . . ." given that the faculty senate, like any legislative branch, is part of a representative democracy, and it represents the concerns of the faculty. Use of the word "concern" alongside the phrase "with the open nature of Faculty Senate meetings" sounds, to sources at least, like the Martha Saunders administration's resistance to allowing faculty senate representation on the inner cabinet. Ironically, this representation is what Rehner and other faculty senators are now calling for; of course, this access will mean little if subsequent faculty senate meetings are held in confidence. (As such, Saunders might consider changing course to allow it.) Lastly, as the remainder of Rehner's comments point out, audio recording of senate meetings, at least as far as rank-and-file faculty are concerned, are a thing of the past.

The 2-Mar-2012 senate minutes also reveal something alarming with regard to faculty representation. Of the 41 USM faculty senators, two (4.9% of all senators) were absent and without proxies at that day's meeting. Additionally, 15 senators were present by proxy only, meaning that another 36.6% of elected senators missed the meeting, bringing the total to 17 (41.5% of all senators) who did so. To make matters even worse, 13 of the 15 of those senators present by proxy hand delivered their proxies to *sitting senators* who attended the 2-Mar-2012 meeting, meaning that only 26 individuals (24 elected senators and 2 unelected proxies) attended that particular meeting. This total represents occupation of only 63.4% of all senate seats (and only 58.5% of all 41 seats if only elected representatives are counted). If something should be of "concern," sources point out that this is it.