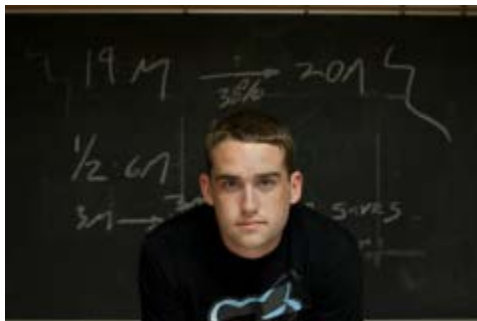


Another USM Student Steps Up to Plate on Budget

HATTIESBURG – USM students are stepping forward at unprecedented rates to offer solutions to the many problems plaguing the institution. From [tough questions](#) at student Q&A sessions on the budget, to explaining to religion, philosophy, and other USM students who are affected by program eliminations that [the USM approach](#) to “teaching out” is one that will likely leave them “high and dry,” USM students are calling into question the motives and capabilities of the Martha Saunders administration’s handling of the major issues of the day. To top it off, the criticisms are not limited to USM students, as younger students at Saint Andrews Episcopal High School in Jackson have also stepped into the arena to critique the Saunders administration’s approach to USM’s problems.

As *The Student Printz* reporter Samantha Schott explains in her [25-Oct-2010 news story](#) entitled “Student develops budget plan,” the trend described above is continuing, now with USM sophomore Daniel Miles’ analysis of USM’s 2009-10 and 2010-11 operating budgets.



Daniel Miles (photo by Bryant Hawkins)

According to Schott’s report, upon attending the 25-Sept-2010 Q&A and hearing the Saunders administration’s explanations of attempts to deal with the budget crisis, Miles spent 12 hours in the USM library “studying USM’s budget books.” After spending another month on the issue, Miles now reportedly has a plan to save the religion program and faculty, along with others, without raising tuition or seeking additional state monies. According to Miles’ research, diverting only one-half of the \$192/semester fee that students pay athletics would generate an additional \$3 million annually for USM’s academic programs, a figure that *is equal to* the cut from the academic side of the institution made in Sept-2010 by Saunders. Of course, Miles’ plan would leave USM athletics short \$3 million, however he is also promoting a provision in the plan that would have students paying to attend athletics events rather than getting tickets provided for them at no charge, as currently done.

Interestingly, a *TSP* poll now shows that 88% of USM students favor Miles' idea, while another 10% might be in favor of it if given more information. Thus, only 2% of all respondents oppose Miles' plan outright. As expected, at least by sources, the Saunders administration again put interim USM chief financial officer Russ Willis out front to criticize Miles' ideas. Willis told Schott that athletics self-generates about two-thirds of its budget from ticket sales, television revenues, etc., and that athletics must spend all of its allotted budget. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that Willis' points do nothing to address Miles' budget plan, which is gaining support from other campus constituencies, such as the USM Council of Chairs, which is headed by Christopher Campbell. Even the generally pro-administration SGA president Kasey Mitchell sees merit in Miles' proposal. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that Miles' plan will ultimately [expose](#) the [weaknesses](#) in USM's athletics, such as [those highlighted](#) by Susan Green-Lewis' [editorials](#), and other [reports](#) and [editorials](#) here [at](#) USMNEWS.net. These [weaknesses stand](#) even after Willis' numerous attempts to defend athletics spending at USM.

The USM budget crises of 2009 and 2010 promise to continue into 2011, when another \$10 million in cuts is expected to hit the institution. Stay tuned to USMNEWS.net for more as these stories develop further.