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## Bounty on 'Graffiti Vandals' Raised to \$1,000

HATTIESBURG – The Martha Saunders administration of USM has raised the so-called bounty on the [three \(white\) males being sought](#) for what USM officials [are calling](#) graffiti-related “vandalism” that [occurred](#) on the USM [campus](#) in the early morning hours of 29-October-2010. A [recent installment](#) in the USMNEWS.net series, **The Farm**, reported that the Saunders administration originally provided (on 2-November-2010) a \$300 reward for information leading to the capture of the alleged campus graffiti vandals (see insert below). Now, USM executives have raised the bounty on the alleged criminals to \$1,000, an astounding figure to some given (1) the episode’s seemingly innocuous outcome, and (2) the dire budgetary situation that has confronted USM since 2009, leading to budget cuts totaling \$25 million to date.

### USM Now Throwing \$300 Out for Capture of Alleged Vandals

Hoping to deputize USM’s 16,000 students, the USM administration is [now putting up](#) a \$300 reward for information leading to the capture of the three males accused of “vandalism” and “malicious mischief” relating to the 29-Oct-2010 campus graffiti episode, wherein “Impeach Saunders” messages were placed on 10 campus locations. The alleged perpetrators apparently used chalk and water-soluble shoe polish to accomplish their mission. Despite USM police chief Bob Hopkins’ [public statements](#) indicating that [no permanent damage](#) occurred during this particular episode, unnamed USM officials are now claiming that the alleged vandals “caus[ed] several hundred dollars in damage and cleanup costs.”



Sources tell USMNEWS.net that any expense on USM’s part would likely fall in the “cleanup costs” portion of the above statement. The cleanup costs would likely be measurable, given the cleanup crew’s expected status as [a USM auxiliary](#). Sources also admit to being surprised that USM can afford to allocate \$300 to such a *Quixotic* enterprise as “tracking down” and “bringing in” these “[water-soluble graffiti]villains,” particularly given that the USM administration has found it necessary to deliver termination notices to almost 50 tenured and tenure-track faculty since August of 2009.

News of the \$1,000 reward comes via an e-mail originating from the USM police department. The text of that e-mail is inserted below

From: all-facstaff-bounces@usm.edu [all-facstaff-bounces@usm.edu] On Behalf Of USM Mailout [usmmailout@usm.edu]  
Sent: Tuesday, November 02, 2010 3:22 PM  
To: all-facstaff@usm.edu; all-students@usm.edu  
Subject: [All-facstaff] Crime Stoppers Alert: University Police Department

Message from The University Police Department

University of Southern Mississippi Police Department Crime Stoppers is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to an arrest for the acts of vandalism and malicious mischief that occurred early Friday, Oct. 29, at several buildings on campus in Hattiesburg. University property, including buildings and vehicles, were chalked and painted causing several hundred dollars in damage and cleaning costs. Information was obtained in connection with these incidents that three male subjects were seen chalking a sidewalk near the front of campus.

If you have any information about these crimes, contact the University Police Department Crime Stoppers at 601.266.4986. The identity of those providing information will be kept confidential.

According to the USMPD's e-mail above, the graffiti artists are being sought for "vandalism" and "malicious mischief." The e-mail also states that the so-called vandals caused "several hundred dollars in damage and cleaning costs." Sources tell USMNEWS.net that the administration's zealousness vis-à-vis this "campus crime" may not, in the end, play well with the USM student body, which is already disillusioned with Saunders' ability to lead the institution into its second century. Readers of USMNEWS.net generally agree, as attested to by the messages regarding the \$1,000 bounty inserted below:

This is totally insane.

The USM Police Chief said originally in *The Hattiesburg American* that hosing [the graffiti] off with water removed all evidence. I wondered how it could be a felony if there was no damage. I guess "damaged ego" is a felony charge at USM, right?

Is there such a thing as "a little bit crazy"?

Sources tell USMNEWS.net that this episode seems to be getting out of hand, and the potential damage from the administration's reaction to it threatens to be much worse than any harm caused by the original episode itself. Only time will tell where this story turns from here. Stay tuned to USMNEWS.net for further developments.