

Federal Auditor: USM Misused \$5.3 Million in FEMA Aid

HATTIESBURG - According to a 4-Dec-2012 [report for](#) *The Hattiesburg American* by Associate Press reporter Jeff Amy, a federal audit indicates that USM misused more than \$5 million in Hurricane Katrina aid that it received from FEMA after the 2005 storm destroyed the USM-GC campus in Long Beach. As Amy states, “[t]he Department of Homeland Security’s Inspector General says it reviewed \$12.2 million of the \$41.1 million that USM received to rebuild its Gulf Park campus in Long Beach following the 2005 hurricane,” and found that USM misused \$5.3 million in federal support.



The vice president of USM-GC, Frances Lucas, responded by pointing out that USM should relinquish \$1.44 million in aid from FEMA that it has yet to spend since receiving it after the 2005 storm. Lucas, the daughter of current USM interim president Aubrey Lucas, also added, however, that the remaining \$3.85 million that was flagged by DHS was, with emphasis added, “*mostly* spent properly.”



Sources indicate that the \$5.3 million in misused funds represents 43.4% of the \$12.2 million that the DHS reviewed, and that if USM misused the total received from FEMA at this same rate (i.e., 0.434), the institution may have ultimately misused as much as \$17.8 million in Katrina aid. Of course, this money – certainly the \$5.3 million flagged by DHS’s Inspector General – could have instead gone to support the rebuilding of New Orleans and/or other areas of south Mississippi that were devastated by the storm back in 2005.