

## Is a Racial Divide Forming on USM Campus?

HATTIESBURG – *The Hattiesburg American's* [breaking news links](#) reported on 14-Nov-2011 that several sorority students at USM were placed on sorority probation after a photo showing them dressed in blackface and costumes, reportedly in an effort to reflect the 1980s characters in the Huxtable family on the television sitcom *The Cosby Show*, became public. The costumes were worn as part of a 1980s-themed costume party that occurred off campus. A photo of the party-goers was submitted to *The Hattiesburg American* on 11-Nov-2011. Implicated in this latest on-campus race-based scandal are six current members of USM's chapter of Phi Mu (ΦM) sorority.

According to *The Hattiesburg American*, "The executive officers of Phi Mu and those members in the photo met on Sunday evening [13-Nov-2011] with a group of Southern Miss African-American student leaders." USM dean of students, Eddie Holloway, came out of the meeting with the view that the six ΦM members involved ". . . clear[ly] . . . had little cultural awareness or competency, and [they] did not understand the historical implication of costuming in blackface." The ΦM National Sorority also provided a response that denounced the action; this response [was published](#) by *WLOX-TV News*. Lastly, USM vice president for student affairs commented on the issue, stating that ". . . this photo was offensive, insensitive and regrettable, and is counter to the rich appreciation for diversity that marks our student body."



Eddie Holloway

Joe Paul

The race-based [controversy preceding](#) the current one apparently involved segregation of dormitories on the USM campus, a situation brought to light by USM [faculty senate president](#) Timothy Rehner. With the two scandals occurring back-to-back, it appears as though a racial divide on the USM campus is forming and being exposed.