

Lawsuits against USM Piling Up

HATTIESBURG – According to a 17-Sept-2012 [report in](#) *The Clarion Ledger*, another former USM faculty member has filed suit against the institution, also naming former USM president Martha Saunders, former USM provost Robert Lyman, College of Health dean Michael Forster, and CoH associate dean Kathy Yadrick. According to reporter Jesse Bass of *The Hattiesburg American*, the latest suit, filed by Bonnie Gerald, “. . . alleges violation of federal law prohibiting discrimination against the disabled and injured, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, several tort claims and express contract violation among others.” Gerald, who is represented by Kim Chaze, a specialist when it comes to representing plaintiffs in civil actions against USM, is seeking reinstatement (to the USM faculty) and actual and compensatory damages.



Martha Saunders



Robert Lyman



Michael Forster



Kathy Yadrick

Gerald's complaint provides a disturbing story of abuse of power and mobbing by USM administrators. In fact, sources tell USMNEWS.net that the allegations in Gerald's complaint paint one of the worst pictures on record of abuse of faculty at the hands of administrators at USM. According to that complaint, Gerald was enticed by USM officials to surrender her tenured appointment with Louisiana Tech University in 2007 in order to assume a post, as an assistant professor, in USM's department of nutrition and food systems. Gerald's employment with USM was running smoothly until 2009, when Gerald was involved in an automobile accident that resulted in “. . . two broken legs, two broken ankles, a broken arm, multiple fractures, spleen damage and a broken clavicle,” leaving her with limited mobility for a subsequent period. It is at this point, the complaint alleges, that the mobbing at the hands of USM administrators began, including taking away Gerald's online courses “. . . and requiring her to walk with a walker across campus to teach laboratory classes.” Lastly, Gerald's complaint alleges that Yadrick, her direct supervisor at USM (then the department chairperson), informed her (Gerald) that even though she (Gerald) satisfied the research expectations for tenure at USM, she (Gerald) was going to be fired.

Long-time readers of USMNEWS.net will likely recognize the defendants in this particular case. Of course, Saunders is the oft-discussed former president of USM who “resigned” in April-2012 amid numerous scandals, most of which are document here and elsewhere, while Lyman is

recognized from his part in [Tabletgate](#). Forster, [the dean](#) of CoH [during](#) Saunders' 2007-12 administration, [often played](#) the role of cheerleader for Saunders in speaking with the media and others. Finally, Yadrick was recently promoted to associate dean of the CoH, bringing her into USMNEWS.net's [report series](#) on administrative bloat at USM.

For sure, the lawsuits against USM and its administrators are piling up. Stay tuned for more on these stories as they develop further.