

## Lucas Already Running USM

HATTIESBURG – Although [his interim presidency](#) is not set to officially begin until 1-July-2012, Aubrey Lucas is, for all intents and purposes, now managing USM on a day-to-day basis. That point became clear from his 2-May-2012 [press conference held](#) in the presidential conference room in the Aubrey K. Lucas Administration Building on the campus in Hattiesburg. Lucas [stated that](#), with then end of spring 2012 nearing, his duties as interim president of USM will become his top priority in a matter of only a few days. Lucas also informed print and t.v. media gathered at USM that he would be involved in the ongoing search to find a new athletics director for USM, and that he would seek advice from both current interim AD Jeff Hammond and [former USM AD](#) Richard Giannini, who is now working as [a consultant](#) for the University of New Orleans. Hammond and Giannini have been locked in [a public relations battle](#) for some time now regarding [management](#) of the USM athletics department. Thus, Lucas’ comment, which also included the possibility that he (Lucas) could very well be the ultimate decision maker vis-à-vis the new permanent AD, about seeking advice from Giannini marks the first indication from a public official suggesting that Hammond [may not](#) be the preferred figure of Lucas [or the](#) IHL. Saunders has made it public that [she supports](#) Hammond for the permanent position. In speaking to this issue, Lucas stated, “I will certainly be involved [in the search for a permanent athletics director], and it may be that it will fall to me to [make the final decision on that] . . .”



Lucas added that it took some convincing from the IHL to get him to step back into the leadership role at USM. Having now done that, he said that USM’s problems can be solved, and “he is confident all the issues at hand can be resolved with patience.” Asking for patience, however, signals to the USM family that the problems currently facing the institution are both wide and deep, a position USMNEWS.net sources have maintained for some time now. Lastly, the Lucas news conference culminates the brief period between 27-Apr-2012, the day Saunders resigned, and 2-May-2012 wherein the Saunders administration of USM essentially melted completely away. With the 77-year old Lucas now governing the 100-year old institution largely on his own, Saunders is left to preside over spring 2012 commencement exercises and a ground-breaking ceremony for the new College of Business building.