

More Budget Cuts Headed USM's Way in 2009

HATTIESBURG — Based on Elizabeth Crisp's [15-Oct-09 report](#) for *The Clarion Ledger* entitled "Another higher ed cut likely," much more budget-cutting pain is headed USM's way before the end of 2009. IHL Commissioner Hank Bounds reported at the Oct-09 IHL meeting that state higher ed budgets were cut \$32 million in Sept-09 alone, and that he expected another 3% cut *before* the end of the calendar year 2009. Bounds also speculated to his audience that this year's budgets would be cut a total of about \$109 million by 2012.

Bounds called these and other numbers "scary," yet indicated that in dealing with these and future cuts universities should begin somewhere other than with academic programs. Jackson State University faculty and staff are being told to prepare for furloughs over the spring break holiday, and possibly even the winter (Christmas) break. Bounds added that the IHL will be looking at a 3-year plan for tuition increases across the state. According to Bounds, the universities are simply trying to figure out how to survive.

Sources tell USMNEWS.net that while USM president Martha Saunders got out early on the budget-cutting effort, she missed a real opportunity to save hundreds of thousands of dollars in USM's budget by not following through with provost Robert Lyman's original plan to cut several academic programs and faculty at USM. Instead, Saunders chose to allow some programs/faculty to remain at USM. In the case of economics, five mostly senior economics faculty are slated to retire at the end of 2009-10, while four mostly junior faculty were allowed to remain in USM's CoAL (not CoB) in 2010-11 and beyond.

Word, however, is now coming from campus suggesting that the five mostly senior economists are exploring pretexts *for not retiring* at the end of 2009-10. If they are successful, and some sources believe now that they will be, then USM will not only have failed to provide the \$350,000 in cuts that would have come from eliminating the four junior prof lines, it will have also failed to save the nearly \$1 million associated with the five mostly senior profs. Only time will tell if George Carter and the other senior economics professors will *actually* retire on 30-June-10. It is being reported that they *were not* delivered terminal contracts (for this year, 2009-10) by the Saunders administration during the recent Aug/Sept-09 budget crisis at USM.