

## Saunders Pointing Finger at University Priorities Committee

HATTIESBURG – With a 10-Sept-2010 update to the USM [budget page](#), sources say that it seems clear that USM president Martha Saunders is setting up the University Priorities Committee, largely made up of USM faculty, to take the blame (or the fall) for the decision to terminate 29 tenured/tenure-track faculty and a number of academic programs. The top part of that updated page, inserted below, shows just how Saunders may now be maneuvering vis-à-vis the controversial cuts – the kinds of cuts that only USM appears to be making among the state’s eight public universities.



As the insert above states, the “UPC recommended a total of 111 program cuts” that would have “eliminated 2,950 currently enrolled student majors and approximately 100 instructional lines.” Instead, the “Executive Cabinet implemented [only] 23% of these cuts”, thus saving 85 of the programs *targeted by the UPC*. The webpage update goes on to say that the UPC *recommended* cutting CISE, which was ultimately saved – complete with its 10 faculty lines and 165 student majors – by Saunders and her cabinet. The cabinet also rejected the *UPC’s recommendation* to cut mass communications, which would have resulted in elimination of 16 faculty lines and harm to 424 student majors.

Sources say that Saunders appears to be playing fast and loose with the term “recommended.” Sources also point out that it didn’t hurt mass communications’ prospects given that it is Saunders’ own academic area, and that CISE benefited from being beloved by the Shelby Thames family. Thames was president of USM from 2002-07. Clearly, USM faculty and students need to visit the USM website and peruse this budget update. Everyone needs to judge for themselves whether Saunders is being disingenuous with regard to her descriptions of the budget cut process.