

Saunders has 3 Weeks to Resolve *Tabletgate* Scandal

HATTIESBURG - According to *The Hattiesburg American's* [higher education reporter](#) Ed Kemp, Mississippi State Auditor Stacey Pickering has given the Martha Saunders administration of USM 21 more days to resolve the "Tabletgate" scandal that has engulfed the institution since Aug-2011. In this case, the state auditor's office has defined resolution as USM having all 700 Samsung Galaxy Tab devices properly tagged and listed in inventory. Failure to do so in 21 days will result in USM having to "pay for the tablets as missing state property." Sources tell USMNEWS.net that, because the "scandal" involves USM using \$440,000 *in taxpayer funds* to purchase the 700 tablets as "gifts" to USM students, faculty, staff and various Mississippi politicians, purchasing any undocumented tablets *using state dollars* is senseless. Such a solution makes sense only if USM collects the payments from private sources, whether or not those sources are the tablet's recipients.



Stacey Pickering

Kemp reports that there are 20 or so tablets currently unaccounted for, meaning that USM will be on the hook for anywhere from \$11,000 to \$14,000 should it fail to inventory the remaining tablets. According to USM's [spring 2012 academic calendar](#), spring 2012 semester begins on 17-Jan-2012. Kemp's report (linked above) on the state auditor's deadline was published by *THA* on 28-Dec-2011. As such, the deadline was likely issued by that office on 27-Dec-2011. These dates indicate that by the time USM's spring 2012 semester begins, 20 days will have passed since Pickering issued his deadline. The Saunders administration will then have to properly inventory the remaining 20 or so Samsung devices *on the first day of spring 2012 semester* or face the payment penalty. Sources tell USNEWS.net that it will be difficult for USM to inventory *any* of the remaining 20 or so devices on that day. Thus, Tabletgate will likely linger on into spring 2012.