

## USM Stuck Near Bottom of *U.S. News* Ranking

HATTIESBURG – With the release of the 2013 edition of *Best Colleges* from *U.S. News & World Report*, USMNEWS.net has learned that USM seems to be stuck in the bottom tier of national colleges and universities in the United States. The top tier includes America's 204 best (national) colleges and universities. Among those are Ole Miss (151<sup>st</sup>) and Mississippi State (160<sup>th</sup>), Mississippi's top two national universities. These schools have maintained similar rankings for a number of years. In fact, the 2012 edition of the ranking placed Ole Miss at 143<sup>rd</sup> and Mississippi State at 157<sup>th</sup>. USM's position in the bottom tier, wherein *Best Colleges* does not bother to rank individual institutions, is also becoming commonplace. USM first fell to the bottom tier under former president Shelby Thames, but that was temporarily rectified in the first year under current president Martha Saunders. However, just after USM rose above the bottom tier under Saunders, it returned there and remained throughout the subsequent portion of Saunders' 2007-12 tenure as USM's ninth president. Now, that bottom-tier position is inherited by current interim president Aubrey Lucas.



The 2013 edition of *Best Colleges* reports a 4-year graduation rate of 22% for USM, and a freshman retention rate of 73.8%. No information is provided as to the size of USM's endowment. In [the 2012 edition](#), USM's 4-year graduation rate was also 22%, while its freshman retention rate was 74.2%. So, this latter statistic fell by 0.54% from 2012 to 2013. As with the 2013 edition, no information was provided in the 2012 edition with regard to USM's endowment. Meanwhile, Ole Miss is reported to have a 4-year graduation rate of 38%, a freshman retention rate of 80.8%, and an endowment of \$469,006,324. The first two of these statistics are up from 2012, when Ole Miss' 4-year graduation rate was 34% and its freshman retention rate was 79.7%. These two statistics increased, from 2012 to 2013, by 11.8% and 1.4%, respectively. No information was reported for Ole Miss' endowment in the 2012 edition. Mississippi State is reported to have a freshman retention rate of 83.0% and an endowment of \$346,675,677. No data on the 4-year graduation is reported for MSU. In the 2012 edition, MSU is reported to have a freshman retention rate of 83.0% and an endowment of \$291,434,083. The former number is, of course, unchanged from 2012 to 2013, while the endowment grew by 19% over the year. A 4-year graduation rate of 28% is reported for MSU in the 2012 edition of *Best Colleges*.

Why is USM not reporting an endowment total? Why are USM's numbers constant or falling, while those at UM and MSU are constant or rising? These are just two of the questions that the USM family is asking.