

USM Student Lays It Down, Some Faculty Still Oblivious

HATTIESBURG – With his 21-Sept-2010 [opinion piece](#) for *The Student Printz*, CoB student Zach Mansell displays sophistication beyond his years. Having been one of the economics majors who lost his degree program and faculty from the \$10 million FY 2011 budget cuts, Mansell warns those USM students who have been promised that they will be allowed to complete their degrees in programs cut by the recent \$15 million FY 2012 budget cuts that they should “take the administration’s words with a grain of salt.” Why would Mansell offer such a warning? Mansell, pictured below, knows from experience that completing one’s economics degree has simply meant completing a number of finance courses and calling them economics courses. Now, according to Mansell, he is proficient in *finance*, but isn’t going to be allowed to call himself a finance graduate. At the same time, he is about to pick up a degree in *economics*, despite not having the requisite proficiency in that area due to the faculty cuts and faculty flight.



Zach Mansell

Who can blame Mansell for completing the finance courses? Since the elimination of economics, five economics professors were forced into retirement, while the remaining four fled to other institutions and/or job settings. Now, USM is offering economics course sections taught by Allan McBride, a professor of *political science*.

Meanwhile, some USM professors are still publicly professing faith in the Martha Saunders administration regarding all things budget cuts. As Samantha Schott’s 21-Sept-2010 [news story](#) for *The Student Printz* points out, the USM Chapter of the AAUP is pushing the Saunders administration to set up an appeals process (for embattled academic programs and faculty) that is consistent with AAUP guidelines. USM AAUP president Tammy Greer, a psychology faculty, is understandably cautiously hopeful about the administration’s response to her request that faculty bodies, not the USM administration, drive the appeals process. Recent [reports](#) have indicated that Robert Lyman, USM provost and Saunders’ lieutenant in the appeals process, has not yet even begun to set up the appeals process – one he envisions carrying over into the first part of 2011.

Unlike Greer, however, USM associate professor of English Ellen Weinauer, who is also the membership chair of USM's chapter of the AAUP, appears to be fully buying into the Saunders administration doing the right thing regarding the budget cut appeals process. As Weinauer, pictured below, stated to Schott, "I think Saunders has demonstrated that she does want to follow AAUP guidelines."



Weinauer reached this conclusion when Saunders responded to AAUP requests to make the details of the budget cuts process public, which would follow other AAUP guidelines. Sources say, however, that Weinauer's faith in Saunders is misplaced, given that it seems based on the administration's positive response to the AAUP request to make some details public. According to sources, USM, as a public institution, is obligated to make such information public by state law, not AAUP guidelines. In fact, *The Hattiesburg American* made the details public before USM did so (in response to Greer's AAUP request). As is well known, *The Hattiesburg American* obtained the details via a Mississippi Open Records Act request. The AAUP could have simply made a similar filing, and by doing so it could have subsequently posted the same details to its own website.

The FT 2012 budget cuts continue to make news. As new details emerge, reporters and editorial staff at USMNEWS.net will provide coverage of them.