

IHL Board: USMAF Gifts Giannini New Car

HATTIESBURG – In news that will likely bother those USM faculty supporters of former USM president Martha Saunders, the Mississippi IHL announced today, 15-Nov-2012, at its scheduled monthly meeting, that former USM athletics director Richard Giannini was gifted a new car by the USM Athletic Foundation (USMAF). According to the IHL's *Board Book* for Nov-2012, USM interim president Aubrey Lucas reported today that back on 14-June-2012 Giannini was gifted a vehicle valued at \$42,390, "in honor of his years of service to the university . . ." That portion of the *Board Book* is inserted below.

3. USM – REPORT OF A GIFT FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI ATHLETIC FOUNDATION

Pursuant to IHL Board Policy 301.0806 University Foundation/Affiliated Entity Activities, Subsection D General Requirements of Affiliation Agreements (13), Interim President Aubrey K. Lucas reports that The University of Southern Mississippi Athletic Foundation provided former Athletic Director Richard Giannini a gift in the form of a vehicle valued at \$42,390 on June 14, 2012. The gift was in honor of his years of service to the university, and the gift is considered to be additional compensation.

The insert indicates that Lucas has known about this gift for roughly five months, or 150 days, yet the wider public is learning of this situation only today, mid-November 2012. Another poke in the eye of Saunders supporters is the fact that Giannini's athletics department was, at the turn of 2012, accused of mismanagement by current USMAD Jeff Hammond, then an associate AD at USM. Hammond claimed that the mismanagement was the cause of a \$1.1 million deficit in the USM athletics department at the time, one that has since grown to about \$1.3 million. However, an internal audit conducted under the auspices of the IHL failed to find any support for Hammond's claims, thus clearing the former Giannini administration.

As regular readers of USMNEWS.net are likely aware, during the transition away from the Giannini administration back in late 2011/early 2012, Saunders was allied tightly with Hammond, who made the accusations and the deficit known to the public via interviews with state media outlets. Giannini had support from powerful members of the IHL Board and the local business community, who were against having a Hammond administration of the USMAD. Sources say that the latter group seems to be winning all of the recent battles in what many are calling a political war between Giannini/the IHL and Saunders/Hammond supporters. They also add that it seems clear that Lucas is allied with the Giannini/IHL group.