

Wiesenburg Named New Provost at USM

HATTIESBURG – According [to a report on](#) 10-Apr-2012 from *The Hattiesburg American*, the Martha Saunders administration of USM has named USM vice president for research and [interim provost](#), Denis Wiesenburg, as the new permanent USM provost. Wiesenburg's new appointment is effective 1-July-2012, at which time leadership of academics *and* research at USM will be “centralized” within the USM provost's office. That centralization means that the USM provost's office will integrate the duties and functions of the VP for research office. Sources tell USMNEWS.net that this centralization is surprising, particularly given past comments from USM administrators conveying that the significance of USM's research operations – one that at times generates around \$100 million in grants and contracts – necessitated its own division within the USM administrative hierarchy. According to Saunders' most recent comments, however, this new arrangement “. . . assures a strong linkage between teaching and research” at the 100 year old institution.



Denis Wiesenburg

Saunders' recent announcement also means that USM found its new permanent provost **without having first undertaken a national search**. A provost is arguably a university's second-most important administrative position. As such, a national search is more than warranted to fill such a hole. In USM's case, the “centralization” of academic affairs (the provost) and research (VP for research) means that the provost position *is at least arguably* a more significant one than even that of president. Thus, a national search is essential. Yet, it did not happen. Despite these shortcomings, both Timothy Rehner, the president of the faculty senate, and [Lance Nail](#), the dean of USM's business college, praised Saunders' selection of [Wiesenburg](#) as provost. Sources say that Rehner's [recent turn towards the USM administration](#) makes his unqualified support for this situation *unsurprising*. Most of [what remains now](#) is whether Wiesenburg's salary will rise once again, as it did (by \$35,000 per year) when he assumed the interim provost tag. That change pushed his salary up to \$250,000 per year.