

Aunt Martha's New *Co-Head* Coaches

HATTIESBURG – USM president Martha Saunders was forced, at the end of the 2011 season, to remove, at least according to sources, former USM head softball coach Howard Dobson (whose Lady Eagles went 17-38 in 2011). For Saunders, this marked the first time that she has [had to deal](#) with the failures of one of [her own hires](#). Now, Saunders has made [the unusual move](#) of replacing Dobson, currently an assistant at LSU, [with two](#) new head coaches – or what USM is calling co-head coaches – in Kirsten Voak and Jon Malgradi.



Kirsten Voak



Jon Malgradi

Malgradi comes to USM from Mesa Community College in Arizona, where he served as the head softball coach for the past three seasons. Voak comes to USM after a one-year absence from coaching. From 2006-10, Voak served as an assistant coach at Arizona State, her alma mater.

What USM athletics director Richard Giannini calls a “dynamic combination,” USMNEWS.net sources refer to as a potential disaster for central administrators at USM. For one, the backlash from faculty at having to pay two head coaching salaries for softball, a program that has been in decay for more than a decade, could be harsh. For another, the number of legal and NCAA-related matters in USM’s athletics department in recent months and years calls for customary actions, not unprecedented, at least for USM, decisions. USM’s softball program was only 93-124-2 under Hobson. Now, the institution is calling on two coaches to make a change. At the very least, this action will make for an interesting story in the years to come.