

Galaxy Tab™ Scandal Brewing at USM

HATTIESBURG - An anonymous reader, calling himself/herself "USM Insider," recently alerted USMNEWS.net to a scandal that is now brewing on the Hattiesburg campus. That alert is spelled out via his/her e-mail below:

Dear USMNEWS.net,

Take a close look at this latest release. No doubt the dome has their hand in this to boost student feedback.

The first release said "privately funded", but now they recanted and admitted they used almost a half-million in "auxiliary funds". Where were this funds when Coffman terminated employees due to budget constraints.

No doubt this was an inside deal ... where was the bid for these services? Was this the best price the State could negotiate for an "experiment"?

No doubt I'm jaded, but to see jobs lost to maintain a pilot [program] shows the administration wants good PR over anything else.

The "latest release" to which the reader refers is the 1-August-2011 [USM presser](#) entitled "Southern Miss to Provide Samsung Galaxy Tab™ 10.1 Tablets to Students." There, USM public relations officials indicate that ". . . the University of Southern Mississippi will offer Galaxy Tab™ 10.1 mobile tablets [made by Samsung] to students participating in an Honors College pilot program this fall . . . [, wherein t]he University of Southern Mississippi is piloting up to 1,000 Galaxy Tab 10.1 devices to be distributed to selected Honors College, McNair Scholars, Southern Style and Gulf Coast students." At \$499 each, this pilot program will consume \$499,000, which the presser said is part of a ". . . mobile initiative [whose goal] is to provide Mississippi university students with privately funded tablets focused on enhancing access to education." Clearly, the phrase "privately funded tablets" supports the contention above made by the USMNEWS.net reader.

That same USMNEWS.net reader is also correct in stating that the latest version of the story, [as told on](#) 7-August-2011 by Ed Kemp for *The Clarion Ledger*, has USM putting up almost \$0.5 million to support the program. According to Kemp, "Southern Miss is paying Blackboard \$440,000 from an estimated \$2 million auxiliary fund for consulting and assessment related to the technology." Thus, though the \$499,000 for the tablets may (*or may not*) be coming from "private sources," there will be an expenditure of \$440,000 of Mississippi taxpayer funds to support the tablet program. Given that Kemp's story reports only 700 tablets -- at \$499 each, and for a total of \$349,300 - USM (i.e., the State of Mississippi) will actually provide \$90,700 (or 26%) more for the pilot program than will the so-called private sources.