

Saunders Continues to Rock the Bloat

HATTIESBURG – Van Arnold’s 29-Nov-2011 [press release entitled](#) “Professor Yadrick Named Associate Dean for Research in the College of Health” informs the USM community that nutrition and food professor Kathy Yadrick has been named by the Martha Saunders administration to the post of associate dean for research in the College of Health. In rising to this new post, Yadrick will, according to Arnold’s presser, “. . . focus on mentoring junior faculty in the research process and on developing multidisciplinary proposals with significant external funding potential.” In becoming the latest addition to the Michael Forster (dean) administration of the CoH, Yadrick “. . . joins Jennifer Downey, director of research support, and Howard Fromkin, grants and contracts coordinator, to extend the College of Health’s capacity for increased external funding and scholarly production.”



Kathy Yadrick

Forster refers to Yadrick as “an essential addition” to the CoH administrative team, however he follows this praise by reminding the USM community that the CoH has taken huge hits over *years of budget cuts and faculty losses*. As such, Forster somewhat contradicts himself, at least according to USMNEWS.net sources, who point out that by joining the CoH administration, (1) Yadrick will be pulled even further from her own teaching/research obligations to the CoH, representing something akin to another “faculty loss,” and (2) Yadrick will almost certainly be on the receiving end of an administrative salary supplement, representing something akin to another “budget cut” as far as rank-and-file CoH (and USM) faculty are concerned.

Sources also tell USMNEWS.net that the addition of Yadrick to the CoH admin team will not likely result in any substantive increase in grants/contracts attainment in the CoH, thus making Forster’s (implied) arguments above somewhat specious. They argue, instead, that Yadrick’s “promotion” into the USM [administrative ranks](#) likely [represents](#) a [continuation of](#) the Saunders administration’s [current](#) program of [administrative bloat](#). As [regular readers](#) of USMNEWS.net are [are aware](#), this program [has been](#) well documented [on these](#) pages. This program includes what sources refer to as the notorious “admin bloat shuffle,” which is the characterization of what appears to have happened when Jim Coll was moved out of the USM

Alumni Association and into the USM public relations auxiliary in order to make room for Elizabeth Payne's hiring in the Alumni Association. Payne previously held the dubious position of USM centennial celebration coordinator (for three years) before assuming the post in the USMAA. Also included in this "program" are (1) the hiring of James Tisdale as the CoB's *external relations director*, (2) Lauren Benvenuti's acquisition of the Alumni Association's *manager of constituent relations* post, and (3) Joseph Peyrefitte's promotion to *senior* associate dean of the CoB, to list just a few. More on these stories is told via the links provided above.



Lauren Benvenuti

Jim Coll

Elizabeth Payne

Joseph Peyrefitte

James Tisdale

Finally, a number of the reports and editorials linked above (along with others not linked) make a compelling case that these hires have been the Saunders administration's way of bringing the spouses and/or offspring of prominent USM alumni/supporters into the fold, and onto the state budget. In cases like Yadrick's, however, sources say that a different sort of mission is likely fulfilled. That is, in cycling faculty into and out of the Saunders administration, Saunders is able to build additional loyalty among "her employees." Forster is one of Saunders' [most ardent](#) and [vocal supporters](#). Having more occasions to lean on others in the CoH to support "the administration," that college may be on its way to rising to the top, at least in Saunders' eyes. The rub now, however, is that, at least in the (16-Nov-2011) [opinion](#) of the editors of *The Clarion Ledger*, the fiscal situation in Mississippi may be headed for another dive in the near future. If that occurs, additional light will be shining on the inconsistencies in Forster's quote above.