

## Second Harassment Complaint Filed Against Hammond

HATTIESBURG - Well into the evening of 24-Apr-2012 *The Hattiesburg American* [is reporting](#) that a second harassment complaint has been filed against USM interim athletics director Jeff Hammond. This time another female administrator, senior associate athletic director Sonya Varnell, has filed a complaint with the Mississippi Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against Hammond, who was appointed by USM president Martha Saunders to replace (on an interim basis) Richard Giannini, who retired in Jan-2012. According to Varnell's legal counsel, Winston J. Thompson III of the Cochran Firm in Jackson, Varnell's case involves "intimidation and bullying" at the hands of Hammond, much like in [the recent complaint](#) from Diane Stark, a former senior associate athletics director for internal affairs. Saunders reportedly stated that, if Hammond did indeed yell and curse at his subordinates in the USM athletics department, "[t]hey probably needed to be yelled at."



**Jeff Hammond**

Thompson informed *THA* that the EEOC complaint process normally takes 60 days to complete, and that he and his client (Varnell) would wait for that process to conclude before taking any other action(s) in the matter. Stark's attorney, Kim Chaze, also informed *THA* that Stark is awaiting the EEOC's report in her case, but that his client's complaint is just a prelude to legal action. As indicated throughout the USMNEWS.net Archives, Chaze has a noteworthy win-loss record in court cases involving malfeasance at USM. Sources suggest that this record is likely to improve, especially now that Varnell has entered the arena. For Hammond, these complaints could not be coming at a more inopportune time. He is currently a candidate to assume Giannini's former role as permanent AD at USM. That candidacy looks to be in serious jeopardy at the moment.