

Breaking News

USM's Enrollment Down by at Least 185 Students

HATTIESBURG – According to a 13-Sept-07 news story by Laraye Brown in *The Hattiesburg American* (excerpt shown below), USM's fall 2007 enrollment of 14,592 students is down from fall 2006 enrollment of "more than 15,000" students. Among Mississippi's public universities, USM's enrollment numbers were down by the largest number. While some sources (IHL) are reporting a 1.3 percent decline (from fall 2006) in "unduplicated headcount" for USM, which amounts to 185 students, Brown's numbers represent a decline of 2.7 percent or more, amounting to at least 409 students.

USM sees enrollment decrease

By LARAYE BROWN

Enrollment at the University of Southern Mississippi is down slightly, to 14,592 for the fall semester, including 11,926 undergraduates and 2,666 graduates, and it posted the biggest loss among state universities, according to figures released Wednesday by the state college board.

Enrollment in fall 2006 was more than 15,000, according to a previously published article.

The release of the most recent numbers contradicts what new USM President Martha Saunders reported to Hattiesburg Rotarians in August (2007). As Susan Lakes reported in *The Hattiesburg American* on 8-Aug-07 (see below), Saunders told Rotarians that USM's enrollment was "up 10 percent."

Saunders: USM's future 'bright'

By SUSAN LAKES

The college in Hattiesburg was where Martha Saunders' daddy used to send her to get answers to all kinds of questions.

Now Saunders heads up that college - the University of Southern Mississippi, which she sees as a growing and changing place with a bright future. Saunders, the university's recently named president, told the Hattiesburg Rotary Club about some of the happenings at the school Tuesday.

She was guest speaker when the Rotarians, a group 112 members strong, met at Southern Oaks House and Garden.

"It's good to be home," Saunders, a Rotarian herself, told the group.

"We are your neighborhood university," she said, noting that a lot has changed since she earned a Southern Miss degree "thirty-something" years ago.

What started as a small, regional college is now a university recognized nationally for achievements in academics, programs and athletics.

"Ride all the rides," Saunders said about all the enrichment opportunities available to students.

Enrollment is up 10 percent she said about the multi-campus Southern Miss that now has six teaching and research sites.

About funding, Saunders said Southern Miss has good philanthropic support, an important factor with the shrinking of public dollars.

"The future is bright," she said about all that's happening at the university, which will celebrate its 100th birthday in 2010.

Based on Brown's more recent story, Saunders' statement was at least 11.3 percentage points too high, if not more. How this discrepancy will affect Saunders' credibility in either the short-term or the long-term is unknown at this time. It will likely cause some of *THA*'s audience to recall the enrollment reporting scandal that shook the Thames Administration in its early months.