

Burying the Scandals

Editorial

The Galaxy Tab computer scandal is not the first time Southern Miss has been implicated in the misuse of University and state funds. In April 2010, usmnews.net and the local newspapers were reporting on the situation surrounding possible misconduct in the [USM Research Foundation](#). For those who may not recall the scandal surrounding the USM Research Foundation, former USM employees [Richard and Helene Hadden](#) are alleged to have perpetrated a breach of trust in an \$860,000 stock purchase, involving the Haddens' Saone Corporation and the [USMRF's Pinion Properties LLC](#). Richard Hadden was Pinion's managing agent at the time of the 2008 purchase, as well as USM's director of strategic venture development. In his capacity as USM's DSVD, Hadden was paid a salary of \$150,000 per year. Hadden's wife, Helene, also served USM as a visiting research assistant. Pinion Properties [filed suit](#) against the Haddens a few weeks later. In November 2010, the matter was quietly and confidentially settled by vote of the IHL which insisted on a term apparently not recommended by counsel.

On motion by Trustee Ross, seconded by Trustee Whitten, with Trustees Owens and Pickering absent and not voting, all Trustees legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the request to settle the lawsuit styled as *Pinion Properties, LLC v. Hadden, et al.* as recommended by counsel if the agreement provides that the settlement can be disclosed, if required, by a court of competent jurisdiction.

Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, [Final Board Book](#), November 18, 2010, page 16 (pdf page 26).

The settlement with the Haddens was buried behind a wall of secrecy requiring any citizen who wants to know what had happened to file a legal action, knowing that it will be opposed by Southern Miss and the IHL, to persuade a court to allow them access to the information. Just what are the odds of someone spending thousands of dollars to find out what happened?

Will the newest scandal involving (according to [Southern Miss' press release](#)) failure properly to account for the tablets as property of the State of Mississippi and possible violations of IHL policies, be quietly buried? In short, will Mississippi citizens, and USM students and faculty, be denied access to information regarding potential incompetence of the Saunders' administration?

How can citizens become informed to take action to correct fraud, abuse, and incompetence of government and administrators when those government officials and administrators control and conceal the information?