

# CoB News, 1 December 2008

## Closing in on the Brandt

The eligibility period for the CoB's Louis K. Brandt Faculty Research Award is coming to a close. As such, USMNEWS.net will soon be providing a report showing the current projected standings with 30 days left in the contest.



Fujun Lai

As reported previously, associate professor of management information systems Fujun Lai is the clear leader at this point. In fact, Lai's record is so impressive that it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which Lai is overtaken.

## Planegate at USM

With her [28-Nov-08 article](#) entitled "USM plan to lease airplane in the works," *The Hattiesburg American's* Valerie Wells follows up on USMNEWS.net's breaking story about the decision by USM to lease a Beechcraft King Air 200 airplane for about \$2 million. According to Wells' story, the plane will be used by USM personnel for official business and its use will be administered by USM president Martha Saunders. Through Wells' report, Saunders used the example of her recent 1-day trip to Jacksonville, FL, to justify the lease deal. According to Saunders, a recent "one-day meeting" in Jacksonville could have been made more cost-efficient had USM taken possession of this BKA 200 by that time. Though Saunders describes the Jacksonville trip as part of USM business, it seems to sources to be eerily similar to a [letter to the editor](#) published by USMNEWS.net regarding Saunders' visit to Jacksonville's Mayo Clinic for an annual physical examination.

A sampling of the comments made by *THA* readers is inserted below. On the whole, *THA* readers seem to be adamantly opposed to Saunders' decision to lease the aircraft (see below).

br549 wrote:

WOW, two days out of the office compared to paying around 3,000.00 an hour for a plane, somebody is staying in some extremely nice hotels and getting pay an ungodly amount of money to justify that, with email, cell phones nobody is "out of the office" .that term died several years ago!!!

11/28/2008 2:47:25 PM

HASkeptic wrote:

Who do USM administrators think they are, Detroit CEOs? Are you sure Thames isn't connected to this deal somewhere?

11/28/2008 12:19:50 PM

Unfortunately for the Saunders administration, this story has traveled at least as far north as Wisconsin, where the university system president there is currently under fire. And, the Deborah Ziff article in the [26-Nov-08 issue](#) of the *Wisconsin State Journal* to which this report refers shows just how unpopular the Wisconsin system president is, and how his decision to hire Saunders to head the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater is now viewed. The insert below, taken from the readers' comments section of Ziff's story, gives some indication of each:

<p>MalcomX Forumite Joined: 08/13/2007 Total posts: 596</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#">link</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">see November 24, 2008 for pictures of the plane:</p> <p>How about Reilly's last hire, the former Chancellor at Whitewater who went on to become the President of the University of Southern Mississippi. She would be a good role model for him to use. She just bought a 2 million dollar plane and is having \$300,000 dollar renovation to the bedroom of the president's house. Great hire Reilly.</p>
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It seems clear now that USM's decision to lease the aircraft, a decision USM spokesperson Jana Bryant says is not finalized, will continue to plague the Saunders' administration, at least from a public relations standpoint.

## 6-6

With USM's recent victory over Southern Methodist University, the Eagles became bowl eligible and look to be headed for the New Orleans Bowl in just over three weeks. Though the win was nice, and the imminent bowl trip averts the possible financial crisis reported on weeks ago by USMNEWS.net, new coach Larry Fedora could not avoid USM's first non-winning regular season since 1993. With a 6-6 record heading into a bowl, USM will be hoping to avoid its first losing (full) season since 1993 as well. The only other question that remains now is whether USM president Martha Saunders will use USM's new BKA 200 aircraft to travel to the bowl game to support the Eagles.