

# CoB News, 8 December 2008

## Is Saunders Buckling Under Weight of Recent Scandals?

It appears as though the customized textbook and planegate scandals are taking a toll on the Martha Saunders administration of USM. On 5-Dec-08 *The Hattiesburg American's* editor penned "USM should consider less costly travel," [an editorial column](#) about the planegate episode and Saunders' ill-advised decision to spend \$2 million leasing a Beechcraft King Air 200 twin-engine airplane. The editor referred to the deal, which was signed off on by Mississippi's IHL Board, as "a bad move" and as "a luxury . . . the university can do without."



Martha Saunders

The day before (4-Dec-08) Saunders addressed customized textbookgate via her occasional weblog. There, in [an entry](#) entitled "Textbooks," Saunders opens with: "There has been quite a bit of discussion in recent weeks about the use of customized textbooks at Southern Miss. Although the important points of debate have been well covered in the media, I thought I'd throw in my two cents." Just what were her two cents? "At this point I am not prepared to call for an outright ban [on the assignment of customized textbooks]."

USMNEWS.net has already heard from readers on both of these ongoing scandals. Though most of the interest has been focused on planegate, one reader responded to the Saunders' recent (weblog) decision regarding customized texts, and in doing so, linked the two scandals together. An excerpt appears here:

"In the current debate . . . [Saunders] is simply demonstrating her unwillingness to tell crooked faculty to stop stealing from students. Yes, the math lab is nice, but USM should have used the airplane money to build the math lab if it's that important to the success of USM's students."

As sources indicate, whether or not USM's fledgling administrators learn from these episodes remains to be seen.

## RateMyProfessors Releases Top 10 Faculty (Universities) 2008

The popular website ratemyprofessors.com has recently released its Top 10 university/college faculty list for 2008. This list ranks the top 10 colleges/universities in the U.S. based on the ratings of college students of their professors' teaching abilities. This particular list is captured by the screen below:

The screenshot shows the RateMyProfessors.com website in a Windows Internet Explorer browser. The page title is "Top 10 - RateMyProfessors.com". The URL is "http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/top10Profs.jsp?tab=schools\_top10". The page features a search bar at the top with the text "Enter keywords (e.g. Sam Smith Ball State University)". Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "Top Rated", "Top Faculty", and "Hottest". The "Top Faculty" tab is selected, and the "SHOW ONLY:" dropdown is set to "UNIVERSITIES". The main content area displays a list of the top 10 universities, ranked from 1 to 10. The list is as follows:

Rank	University
1	University of South Alabama
2	Louisiana Tech University
3	University of Houston
4	Southeastern Louisiana University
5	Kennesaw State University
6	Florida International University
7	Brigham Young University
8	Northern Kentucky University
9	Stony Brook University (SUNY)
10	Virginia Commonwealth University

Below the list, there is a "Methodology" link. On the left side of the page, there is an advertisement for a Nike jacket with the text "ESCAPE THE ELEMENTS" and "Bonded Full Zip Jacket - \$210". On the right side, there is an advertisement for Trojan condoms with the text "help us donate 1,000,000 condoms now" and "you can make the difference". Below the Trojan advertisement, there are two more advertisements: "Custom College Gifts" and "Online Accredited Degrees".

As the screen above indicates, the University of South Alabama is #1, Louisiana Tech University is #2 and Southeastern Louisiana University is #4. These institutions employ former CoB marketing faculty Alvin Williams, Barry Babin and Tara Lopez, respectively. Each of these institutions is a peer institution of USM's, and, as such, represents the kind of quality that one would think that USM's constituencies would aspire to.