

DEAR USMNEWS.NET

Dear usmnews.net,

After reading Tim Doherty's January 5, 2013 [report for](#) The Hattiesburg American, my question is, does Aubrey Lucas believe we are all stupid? When he took the job as interim president, he clearly indicated that he viewed it as a [short term proposition](#) with a goal of being out of the president's office by January 1, 2013. If all had gone as planned (which it seems to rarely do at USM), Lucas would have already been replaced by a more-or-less permanent president. Yet he [refuses to acknowledge](#) his culpability in signing the disastrous contract with former head football coach Ellis Johnson, claiming "[y]ou cannot imagine the repercussions that would have taken place if I said I'm not going to sign this contract." Lucas does not tell us the repercussions, but it seems that the most significant would have been for him to say "this is a potentially disastrous contract that could cost the University, its students and the taxpayers millions of dollars." What's the worst thing that could have happened? He would have been asked to step down as interim-president, a job which he indicated he really didn't want anyway or at least only for a short time. If that particular disastrous repercussion had occurred, he could have ended his service to the University with a sense of pride that he had done the right thing.

As it is, he has left an athletics program, already heavily in debt, burdened by an additional \$2.1 million pay out to Ellis Johnson and even more to the various assistant coaches who have been replaced by new head football coach Monken. What repercussions could be worse?

Name withheld by request

Dear Name withheld by request,

For what it is worth, I agree with you, as do many of our readers. However, this is not the first time that Dr. Lucas decided he didn't want to deal with repercussions. Take a look at one of the most [shameful episodes](#) in the history of USM, if not the State of Mississippi. Mr. Clyde Kennard, a former sergeant and paratrooper in the U.S. Army applied for admission to USM (then known as Mississippi Southern College). There is no doubt Mr. Kennard met all conditions for acceptance, except for the fact that he was black. However, Mr. Kennard wasn't just rejected; he was punished for his efforts to become the first black to be admitted to USM. He was falsely accused of a crime, prosecuted and jailed. As stated in a [New York Times](#) report, "... state officials not only rejected Mr. Kennard's repeated applications but also plotted to kill him."

Dr. Lucas, who was at the time Director of Admissions at Mississippi Southern College blamed "the governor, J.P. Coleman, who decided against admitting Mr. Kennard." Although he said in 2006 -- long after Mr. Kennard's death -- "it was a mistake", he certainly did not do anything to

prevent the injustice. As this editor as previously stated, the behavior of Mississippi officials was disgusting and despicable.

Now, in an incident that reflects simple incompetence, an indifference to the waste of student and taxpayer dollars, and a desire not to deal with “repercussions”, Dr. Lucas is right back where he started in the late 1950s and called on to make a hard choice. He is blaming others for his failure. Just as Dr. Lucas blamed the former governor of the state for rejecting Mr. Kennard’s application, he now blames former head coach Johnson for hard bargaining to procure the best possible contract. He simply ignores the fact that in both instances he could have said, “No.” However, then he would have had to deal with the repercussions of doing the right thing.